UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE MEANING OF HOME
TO
OLDER RURAL PEOPLE

BY

PAMELA JEAN RALSTON ©

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Dedication

To my parents Jean and Bill,

who taught me to attend to others and to complete my life tasks.

To my life partner Don,

whose love and patience has never wavered, and whose listening, encouragement, and editing have demonstrated his belief in me as we journey together.

To Kayla,

who inspires me to be the best I can be.

ABSTRACT

This study, conducted in Central Alberta, Canada in 1998, explored an understanding of the meaning of home to older rural people. Using a hermaneutic phenomenological approach, the experience of home to individuals between the ages of 73 and 88 years, who lived in their own home, was explored. Experiences of feeling at home were the focus of the seven interviews, using a guided interview format.

From the analysis three elements emerged as the experience of home: (a) having a sense of relatedness, met by being in connection with nature, having space conducive to hosting overnight guests, having a kitchen as the centre of the home, and having possessions with memories and familiarity; (b) having a sense of purpose, met by continuing life patterns and responsibilities, hobbies for which one is seen to be competent; and (c) having a sense of autonomy, met by making choices, being independent, and feeling in control of one's environment.

The implications of these results are applicable to planners for congregate care settings and to family members assisting an older rural person in a residential relocation. Literature was reviewed that supported the three elements that emerged from this research. Settings and supports can be in place to enhance the opportunities to experience home. Enabling older rural people to interact with nature, having family style kitchens with tables and chairs for people to gather around, encouraging people to decorate their personal space, providing opportunities for reciprocal relationships, meaningful contributions and activities, provides opportunities for the experience of home. The need for further research in this area will be discussed along with further implication of the results of this research.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Home is a place of security within an insecure world, a place of certainty within doubt, a familiar place in a strange world, a sacred place in a profane world. It is a place of autonomy and power in an increasingly heteronomous world where others make the rules.

-Kimberly Dovey "Home and Homelessness," 1985, p. 46

Background

Home has a particular significance to people. For most of us it is more than a house, a residence or a place to be. It encompasses complex meanings that develop over our entire life. This particular significance is especially true for older people who are living independently but are at an age when they may need to move from their present home to one that releases them from home maintenance, or provides personal care.

Mike, filled with grief, cried to "go home". "This doesn't feel like home and I can't stay here. I need to go home." Hearing this cry fueled a long smoldering discomfort as to the efficacy of care settings as homes that promote a feeling of well being. In hospital social work, occurrences similar to this one transpired regularly, demonstrating the difficulty that older people had accepting a move into a care facility. Not all recovered enough independence following their illness to return to their previous living arrangements; to a place they called "home". Their grief reaction to such a move could be understood when they were being separated from a loved one and/or from a place of residence that was by most standards comfortable and inviting. One experience, which took place through my work with Mike, a rehabilitation patient on my caseload at the hospital in which I worked, caused deeper reflection on what this place called "home" really meant.

Mike's "home" was a room in a second floor walk-up, with a hot plate in the corner and a shared bathroom down the hall. Mike was alone in the world. Following his stroke, he moved into a nursing home for several months to "try it out," but the trial was not successful from his viewpoint and he declared that "going home" was his plan. He followed through with that plan although he was very limited in his physical ability. Why wasn't the nursing home "home-like" enough for Mike? Was it missing something that he needed for an acceptable quality of life? These questions led me to ask thc question: What was it that made his dingy room home? The growing question regarding the experience of home then generalized to a concern for other situations that involved older persons required to move from one residence to another. For some persons, it involved a move into a shared home with children, a home in a new location closer to services or into a long term care facility.

A second point of query soon arose for me. I became conscious of people struggling to find familiarity of place within their care settings. I was providing consultation to staff on the care of people with dementia in Alberta's rural communities. The majority of residents had come from homes in rural areas; from farms, towns and villages, some having relocated a considerable distance from their home and family members. They too, constantly asked the nursing staff or family members to "take them home". Staff relayed their frustrations with this "going home" phenomenon, requesting ideas and insight into making the nursing home feel more "home-like". They wanted to increase the life satisfaction of these residents as well as other residents, many of who suffered from depression and somatic illnesses.

During my reading of Wade Davis's (1992) "Shadows in the Sun: Essays on the Spirit of Place", I was stirred to consider of the phenomenon of home, especially for people who live in rural settings and have reliance on and respect for the land and the seasons. Davis, an ethnobotanist writing of the lands that have tempered the human spirit, describes a ritual that takes place each February among the Quechua in a village in the southern Andes of Peru. He describes an astonishing physical feat performed by the fastest male runner in the village that culminates with the total boundary of their land being encircled during the young man's run, with ritual offerings at sacred places along the way. Davis states that "it is their way of defining their place, of proclaiming their sense of belonging" (p. 10). I wondered if people who live in rural communities, perhaps dependent on the resources of the land for their direct or indirect livelihood, may view their home, "their place" in a way that is specific to rural people. Could there be an understanding of the experience of home for rural people that would support late life transitions to new settings?

Rationale

The experience of home for the rural older person needed to be examined for a number of reasons. Approximately 25 percent of the population of Canada lives in rural areas (Rourke, 1994). Of these 7.5 million people, approximately ten percent, or 750,000 people, are aged 65 years or older. This population of rural seniors is continuing to increase (Statistics Canada, 1997), with the age group over 85 experiencing the highest rate of growth. With the rising number of people living beyond

85 years of age there is an increase in their requirement for assistance in meeting their daily needs. The need for assistance often precipitates a move from an independent home to a living space that includes attendant care or family assistance. In Alberta, health care reform since 1993 has resulted in the closure of several rural health care facilities including long term care centres. For those individuals living in rural settings, the move from home to a setting with assistance, now more than ever, includes a move to a distant community.

Knowledge of how older rural people experience home may influence the older person's experience of re-creating home in new settings, or may encourage programme or policy reform in how people are cared for as they age. Families assisting their older member in their adjustment to any new home may be made aware of the means to support the relocation process. Relocation could include moving to the home of family members, small apartments, facilities that provide for meals and housekeeping support, or to long term care.

There is a common belief that older people want and deserve to live their lives in settings that are conducive to a feeling of home, given the alternative number of care projects that are currently underway in Alberta (Damsma, Eales, Gardner & Keating, 1998). Evidently, more information about what home is or what determines home-like surroundings, gathered from potential residents, would assist with the planning of such settings.

Within the population of older Canadians there is a sub-population that interests me due to their geographical location. This group is the rural population. Rural living for some includes a closer proximity between work and home, along with the accompanying time involved to obtain services and goods to maintain the family and home (Everitt, 1988). If rural seniors cannot receive the health care and support services they need in their communities, they often have to permanently relocate to communities where extended family live or where health care and support services are more readily available. Thus, this is a particularly salient group to study regarding their experience of home and the means that help them to create a feeling of being at home.

It has been hypothesized that people's failure to develop attachment to place, as sometimes happens when their home setting changes, may actually threaten their physical health and sense of well-being (Norris-Baker & Scheidt, 1994). Scholars and caregivers acknowledge the need to provide adequate shelter and care within home-like settings as well as activities that enhance life satisfaction. Rural older people are heterogeneous as a group, varying in age, health and employment status, leisure patterns and income, quality of social networks, housing and culture (Keating, 1991). Older individuals living in rural settings need to be given the opportunity to share their meaning of home. The meaning will further an understanding that may influence the physical design, and philosophical underpinnings of living alternatives of the future.

This research sets out to understand the experience of home to inform those concerned with creating environments that are home to older people. Gaining an understanding of the experience of home from the point of view of older rural men and women could provide health promotion policy makers, planners, care providers and family members with a rich information source to plan for settings that support the experience of home.

Although the experiences that led to this path were primarily those of listening and working with people either moving into long term care or living there, the creation of home-like institutional settings is not the sole focus of the research. Many older people do not live in institutions, but they may experience relocation to more manageable homes such as small houses and apartments. Others working to attain living arrangements for older people that provide a feeling of being at home may also use these results. This includes families who often assist their elder member with transition from one home to another. They may use this research to effectively prepare elders prior to the event, supporting reflections on the meaning of home and assisting with the attainment of the experience of home.

Research Question

The question that focuses this research is, What is the meaning of home from the perspectives of older men and women living in rural communities?

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The complex nature of the study of home necessitates an interdisciplinary approach from a variety of fields. The fields explored for this literature review include those of health, social sciences, environmental psychology and architecture. Although the fields of study on the meaning of home vary, there is a common focus on the meaning that people associate with their home environments and particular aspects of those environments.

Chapter II presents a review of literature related to the research question: the experience of home for rural older people. This review is followed by a discussion of the gaps in the research literature.

The Concept of Home

As described in the literature, home is comprised of several elements. Home is a place where people (a) feel they belong; (b) are surrounded by familiar things; (c) have personal control; and (d) participate in relationships.

Home as Belonging

One of the most often cited elements of home is a place where people feel that they belong. Belongingness has been viewed as people (a) knowing their neighbours and being known by others through a friend and neighbour network (Norris-Baker & Scheidt, 1994); (b) being familiar with their setting and comfortable with negotiating their surroundings, both in their home and the surrounding neighbourhood or community (Rowles, 1990; Howell, 1994); (c) having attachment to people and place through shared history (Troll, 1994; Zingmark, Norberg & Sandman, 1995); and

(d) being actively associated with others with common interests through membership in groups, clubs or in informal gaterings of people with common interests (Everitt, 1988; Cunninghus, 1989; Barkan, 1995).

Those who have studied people and their environment have found that belongingness is enhanced through social and psychological investments in their communities, resulting in networks of people who know each other as friends and neighbours. For example, Norris-Baker & Scheidt (1994) studied rural older people living in Kansas towns experiencing a shrinking economy and whose towns were at risk for survival as towns. They found that the sense of belonging experienced by the residents was in part strengthened by the network of people in the town who had developed friendships and patterns of neighbourly helping. These ties enhanced their sense of belonging and continuing allegiance when faced with decisions regarding relocation due to the deterioration of their towns. A strong sense of friend and neighbour network was attained through reciprocal, positive experiences. Kivett (1986) found in her study of aging in a rural place, that the friend and neighbour networks were the most frequent recurring theme of the research study, significant in affording a sense of belonging when people came to the aid of each other.

A familiarity with one's surroundings is cited as leading to a sense of belonging to a particular community; to a section of farmland; to a particular home. People speak of belongingness enhanced by a recognition of the particular smells that are familiar and knowing where everything is, including things both inside the physical home and on the surrounding landscape such as rocks and trees. Zingmark et al.(1995), in their study of the meaning of home throughout the life span, involved one hundred and fifty persons aged two to one hundred two, to elicit narrated experiences related to the phenomenon of "being at home". Several common interdependent and interrelated aspects of the experience of being at home were identified throughout the life span (Zingmark et al., 1995). One of the aspects of the experience was a sense of belonging. Older people related a sense of belonging when living in or near a home or neighbourhood where they knew their surroundings, and navigated with the security of familiarity. From the age of twenty, people recounted their sense of belonging as related to the familiarity of the landscape around them; certain views; and particular smells (Zingmark et al., 1995). People treasured the familiar surroundings of youth as a familiar place to return to which provided a sense of belonging not found elsewhere. They felt a sense of belonging through their intimate knowledge and familiarity of the surroundings. Rowles (1990) writes of the familiarity of rural settings for the people who live in them, familiar due to those settings remaining fairly stable over time, thus providing a physical context that is easily negotiated by older people in their sense of belonging. In a study of declining towns in rural Appalachia, Rowles (1990) reported that middle aged adults were returning to the familiarity of their earlier rural surroundings after being away establishing themselves in early adulthood. Their sense of belonging drew them back in later life to re-establish near their familiar home surroundings.

A sense of belonging is reportedly enhanced through familiarity with and knowledge of the layout of one's house and neighbourhhood. Howell (1994) found that belonging was attained through familiarity of place as reported in her study of aging women and the environment in which they chose to live. Knowing her home, as well as the surrounding neighbourhood outside, a woman legally blind felt confident navigating her surroundings on her own and felt a belonging in her neighbourhood that familiarity had brought about (Howell, 1994).

Belongingness is enhanced through a shared history of experiences attained through longevity of association. Studies by Troll (1994) and Zingmark et al. (1995) reported belongingness as arising from shared history through experiences between people as individuals and people as family members, taking place over time. In Troll's study of older women and their family connectedness, the shared history of a family contributed to a sense of belonging. Zingmark et al. (1995), although studying a population more diverse in age (2 years to 102 years) than that of Troll's study, also found that belonging as an element of home was enhanced through the sharing of experiences. The younger people of the Zingmark et al. study related their sense of belonging more to family relationships, with the older people of the study relating belonging with continuity of shared experiences with others over time, through friendship and working relations.

Another important aspect of belongingness is that of having an association with others through clubs, church, and interest groups. People are known to attain a sense of belonging through their connections with people with like interests and pursuits. Active participation as a contributing member appears to enhance a sense of belonging, as takes place when people are actively involved in formal and informal groups. In his study of rural farmers and the husband-wife role variation, Everitt (1988) found that belongingness was linked to people's activities. For the husbands who belonged to farm-related organizations, their sense of belonging in a large community of likeminded people was enhanced. Membership in church-related and community groups was more predominant in enhancing belongingness for the wives of Everitt's study. The community groups and organizations of which the husbands and wives were members, were formal groups, ie. professional, educational, spiritual or charitable, and the result of being part of these focused groups was a resulting belongingness experienced by the members (Everitt, 1988).

One might think that people who live in a group setting, in regular contact with the same group of people on a daily basis, sometimes gathering for group activities, would view themselves as members of a group, resulting in a sense of belonging and an experience of home. Such might be the case for older people living in a nursing home where activity programmes are regularly scheduled for groups of people. Cunninghus (1989) discussed the social, spiritual, intellectual, and physically competitive nature of exercise programming as an example of stimulating programs that encourage people to join an exercise group, in her report on the purpose and meaning of activities in institutional facilities for older people. She does not suggest that merely attending the group enhances belongingness or an experience of home. Cunninghis (1989) stated that belongingness through group membership is needed for the experience of home, an experience that she suggested would be difficult to attain in most institutional care settings for the elderly. She stated that the attitude of personnel who work in the facility may increase the level of belongingness in residents through providing an environment conducive to socialization, and groups or gatherings of people with like interests. Barkan (1995) also stated that belongingness in nursing homes may be enhanced through connection to each other as a community, and through informal relationship with others. He supported Cunninghus's assessment of the difficulty in promoting the experience of home in facilities and that very few nursing homes facilitate belongingness in the residents. He found belongingness to be attainable in nursing homes with a concerted philosophy and practice. Belongingness was a central focus in his report on transforming skilled nursing facilities into elder care environments that nurture the spirit and allow elders to have the most meaningful life possible. Barkan emphasized that belongingness is attained through continued facilitated connection between residents, with the purpose of providing opportunities for people to know one another and to be known; a building of a sense of belonging through a sense of community. The informal, semi-structured "club" or group in the institutional setting provided the avenue for the older people to develop a sense of belonging as they came to understand the lives of others living in the institution and gave them the opportunity to allow others to understand them and their lives. Thus the belonginness grew out of the semi-formal, organized groups within the facility (Barkan, 1995).

Home: Surrounded by Significant Things

Much has been written about people's collections and significant things in relation to home. Those who have studied the role of possessions have found that a person's significant things have several functions related to the experience of home. Home is seen as a place where one's significant things are used to (a) stimulate memories of meaningful events (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Belk, 1991a; Marcus, 1992; Zingmark et al., 1995); (b) reflect personal identity (Rutman & Freeman, 1988; Howell, 1994; Damsma et al., 1998); (c) provide connection when significant things are in a particular context (Cszikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Toyama, 1988) and (d) provide comfort through familiarity (Rutman & Freedman, 1988; Howell 1994; Belk, 1994).

Home is reported by many people as closely tied to significant things and the memories they evoke. Possessions and trinkets often stimulate memories of people and past events, and most often stimulate memories of people who are no longer present in the home. For example, Marcus (1992), who interviewed adults in her study on emotional links to the dwelling, reported the methods older people used to relocate and attach to new dwellings. Her interviews resulted in rich stories from the adults in her study that described the homes they lived in as children compared to the homes they created and lived in as adults. Marcus claimed that people's reflection on who and where they have been helped them to become clearer about who they may want to be. She also believed that these reflections would assist others in the designing of structures that best supported people's sense of who they were. Her interest in working with older people and their issues of relocation assured that Marcus included older adults in her study. She reported the story of an 88 year old woman who spoke of the experience of home being attained in part through her collection of items that she had used to help her adjust to her new apartment. By transferring her collection to her new setting, her memories stimulated by the collection provided the continuity she required to feel at home. In this same vein, Zingmark and colleagues (1995) in their study of the meaning of home across age groups asked people to describe the role their possessions had in their lives. The participants, depending on age, described the role of their possessions in a variety of ways. It was the adults, both the youngest and oldest, that described their possessions as memory links, the connection to past events, people and places. The oldest participants in the study reported that memories were stimulated most often through photographs of people and events of their past (Zingmark et al., 1995).

Especially for older people, cherished possessions including photographs aroused memories and maintained links to people and occasions that had been important in the person's life. Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) specifically sought an understanding of the meaning of things in people's lives in a three-generation study involving Chicago-based parents and grandparents discussing their favourite possessions. The older people found that their significant possessions continued to connect them to those relationships and events that had helped to shape their lives. Belk (1991a) in his research on consumer behaviour supported the findings of Csikszentimihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), reporting that when people are attached to gift objects, there is usually a representation of the giver, the object becomes an icon or talisman which serves as a reminder of the loved one after the giver has moved on or died.

One of the ways that people use their possessions as their experience of home is to tangibly memorialize parts of their lives with various souvenirs, mementos, and photograph albums that depict happy occasions, happy relationships and meaningful events. Some research hypothesizes that if people are striving to feel at home, they evoke the feeling by constructing memories and links to those times and people deemed significant in their happiness (Belk, 1991a). They do this through possessions they deem significant to them.

Providing a reflection of one's personal identity has been reported by researchers as a function of the significant possessions in people's lives. Many discussions are of the investment of self that brings significance to treasured possessions, resulting in the possession holding a significant place for the person through its reflection of their identity. In her study of environment and aging women, Howell (1994) recorded the experience of a woman who utilized her significant possessions in her recovery from a serious stroke. On return from hospital, this older individual sought her photographs of family members, memorabilia from her desk, and the sight of her adult children's former rooms, to recover her memory of herself, using the objects of meaning to reconnect (Howell, 1994). Rutman and Freedman (1988), in their study of older people awaiting relocation to age segregated apartments, found that the older person's surroundings, which included their significant possessions, provided validation for their identity and self-image. Some people used the presence of their significant possessions as a means of communicating information about themselves to others, information that helped to validate and communicate their identity and maintain their image of themselves. Such was the case reported by Damsma et al. (1998) in their study of people living in innovative continuing care. They reported that some people used their important possessions such as photos and keepsakes as a reflection of their identity, which helped them to connect to the others in the new home through the introduction and sharing of their past experiences.

Although many people experience home in several settings throughout a life time, the significant possessions that they retain provide for the identity of self that enhances their experience of home. For example, in Belk's (1991a) study of peoples' attachment to their possessions, he reviews the bonds to the material environment that people experience, reporting that possessions have the possibility of providing a sense of identity to their owners ie., giving them a sense of who they are and where they have come from.

The bonding between a person and their things is especially significant when people reluctantly separate from them due to a variety of reasons. The disposition of significant possessions is discussed in a study by Howell (1983) in which she examined the meaning of place in old age. She reports that older people are often especially attached to their significant things and that the disruption of such attachment through moving to smaller living situations may play a part in the mortality experienced with older people and relocation.

A perceived sense of loss of self was found in situations where the older person was not able to dispossess themselves through rituals that involved voluntary, controlled disposition and relegation of the possessions to storage. The ritual process of dispossession was felt to provide a gentle break away from the significant items, providing a sense that the older person would not be truly "gone" following their death if they have a sense of continuation through their possessions. This would be because either they continued to "own" their possessions or because they had given the items to significant people in their lives (Howell, 1983).

Doyle (1992) described, in his examination of the meaning of home to individuals, the review and evaluation process that older people began as they passed on a part of themselves through their possessions given to the next generation. He likened the place that older people live with their significant possessions to "a kind of nest" in which they pursued their final life evaluation, which often involved the dispossessing, or the plans for distribution following their death, of their significant things (Doyle, 1992, p.796).

It appears that for some people, possessions as an experience of home are linked closely with the context in which the possessions reside. Some older people have reported that the loss of the familiar surroundings in which they housed their things led to a loss of the memories their possessions evoked. Whether they lived with grown children in their homes, in shared retirement homes or adult family homes (foster type care), they now lived with other people's memories. They also lived in surroundings where they were not able to use their possessions in a context similar to their past, thus experiencing the loss of connection that their own possessions provided (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Toyama (1988) studied 14 couples and single adults in Sweden in order to understand the complexities of relocation for the elderly. The study involved interviews prior to a housing move, immediate post move interviews, and further interviews approximately a year later. One of the complexities found was that of possessions and the memories they evoke within the context of the former home. One participant reported an example of this in that sitting in her deceased husband's chair in his former bedroom which she kept intact, brought her peace and cheered her up as she "talked to him" (Toyama, 1988). She was not able to recapture this experience in her new surroundings following her move as the context for her husband's chair was lost to her.

Some authors contend that things become bonded to a person, thereby evoking the feelings associated with being at home such as familiarity and comfort. Bonding to a possession is reported to take place over time and involves a shared history or experience between the person and their possession such as, to a favourite armchair or knickknack. An emotional bond between the possession and the possessor takes place over time, through familiarity of constant presence, and habitual use as in the case of a favourite chair (Belk, 1991a).

In Marcus' (1992) study a woman spoke of taking her furniture from the previous home into her new setting and placing it in a similar manner, and how this maintained her sense of "at homeness". The similarity of layout between the settings provided the ability to replicate her former home giving her a sense of comfort through familiarity. In Belk's research that sought an understanding of how possessions affect people's well-being, he studied how people became attached to possessions, and the positive or negative results of the attachments. Belk (1991a) reported on people using their collections as a means to enhance adjustment to new homes, bringing their familiar items in order to experience the security that familiar surroundings bring.

Home as Personal Control

People who have options and choices in their daily lives are said to experience personal control which is an often cited element of home. Personal control is enhanced if people (a) have mastery over their environment; (b) feel they have freedom to choose privacy; and (c) are free to continue their familiar life patterns. The manipulation of one's living space through building a particular structure in which to live, and decorating or renovating according to one's tastes and needs are integral in the personal control element of home (Rutman & Freedman,1988). Having daily choices about amount of privacy (Kerosec-Serafaty, 1984; Damsma et al., 1998), how help will be accepted from others (Magilvy, Congdon, Nelson & Craig, 1992; Damsam et al., 1998), and the pursuit of familiar daily activities (Kivett, 1986), have all been cited in literature as enhancing personal control as it relates to the experience of home.

Personal control as it relates to home is enhanced through feeling mastery over one's environment, the ability to choose or create an environment that feels safe and comfortable. Doyle (1988) and Howell (1994), in their studies of relocation, and the meaning of home for older people, found that home most often had meaning and importance because it was the place in which the older person felt they could create a particular setting according to their tastes and needs. For some individuals, personal control was enhanced when the person was able to create a visible environment with which he or she was able to identify. Doyle (1992) found that the experience of home was enhanced when the person was involved with influencing the visual aspects of new home construction in order that their own image was presented to outsiders. Personal control in the creation of a home has been described in terms of building a home as an experience of intimacy, whereby through creation, the individual becomes intimately connected with the home (Doyle, 1988). The pride people take in their homes is often connected to the work they have done to create the environment in which they live, where they experience being at home.

Personal control enhanced by being able to renovate and "make one's mark" is recorded in Howell's (1994) study of older women and their environments. One of her participants spoke with pride in taking a home that was old and run down and turning it into a modern, warm and convenient setting that she continued to repair and maintain into old age. Similarly, in a study by Rutman and Freedman (1988), participants described home as a place they felt was theirs, a form of ownership that was felt although they did not always "own" the space in economic terms. It was a space in which they felt they had the personal control enabling them to manipulate the environment to express their individuality.

Saile (1983) is another author who discussed personal control as enhancing the experience of home through mastery of the home environment. He studied the rituals people go through to establish a home and transform the physical environment into a richly experienced space. He began by citing Goodman's (1982) report of people in a second marriage who moved to a neutral setting and proceeded to turn it into a home together. They slowly created the experience of home with renovation, renewing the structure and making changes in its appearance to reflect them and to accommodate their needs. Similarily, Nerburn (1995) writes that people have a need to be able to change their environment, and to invest themselves in it, in order to bring about the feeling of familiarity and "ownership" needed to feel at home. Groger (1995) studied how older people living in long term care settings described making their nursing home into "home", and agreed that personal control of one's environment takes place when people feel they are "in charge" of that space, resulting in the experience of home. One of the methods of attaining some personal control was to be free to decorate and furnish one's personal living space.

Another way of exerting personal control is through the freedom to restrict the access of others by declaring privacy when desired. Many researchers state that privacy is an important aspect of personal control. For example, Kerosec-Serfaty (1984) conducted a phenomenological study of inhabitants of rural and urban environments in France. The aim was to ascertain the importance of specific areas of the home. The study found that people valued certain places in their home where they could have privacy when they required quiet solitude. For both rural and urban participants in the study, certain areas of the home allowed people to experience privacy, and the resulting personal control as an experience of home (Korosec-Serfaty, 1984).

People living in care settings such as those in the Assisted Living and Adult Family Living settings of care studied by Damsma et al. (1998) reported on the personal control that allowed them to choose privacy as an element of the experience of home. The males of their study more often mentioned privacy in matters related to feeling at home, thus indicating a possible gender difference in this particular aspect of personal control requiring further research. In any case, the freedom to choose privacy seemed to be integral to the experience of home for a significant number of the participants who lived in the Adult Care settings (Damsma et al., 1998).

Researchers have found that continuation with familiar life patterns enhanced personal control when people have routines and rituals they are used to and responsibilities to fulfill. Continuing with familiar patterns of routines and rituals has been explored in research by Dovey (1985) who writes of home from her studies of literature in the fields of philosophy, anthropology, and psychology, from the perspective of a professor of architecture. Dovey explained the sense of familiarity from past experiences one feels when at home, rooted in familiar routines; routines of personal hygiene and routines of moving within the familiar space. With personal control that allows continuation of familiar patterns, the environment is predictable and one can relax within the stability of routine behaviour and experience. People use patterns of dining, talking, sleeping, and watching television to orient themselves in space and time. The aspect of personal control through continuing familiar life patterns is enhanced when people are able to relate to their environment with their routines of meal times, visiting space, times of sleeping and waking and of watching television or listening to radio, orienting them in space and time (Dovey, 1985).

Similar to Dovey's discussion on routines of movement within the home, Toyama's (1988) research with older people and their memories of former homes found that routines of movement outside of the home enhanced their feeling of personal control. For older people who had recently relocated but had remained within their former neighbourhood, the routine of daily walks was continued in their familiar environment increasing the older person's ability to adapt to new surroundings.

Another study, one of rural aging, was by Kivett, (1986) who studied the well being of rural older people. Personal control was felt through continuing familiar patterns in the use of their time. Choosing to use time productively, usually in work related activity such as gardening and housework, was of importance to rural people's experience of home (Kivett, 1986).

In part, Howell's (1994) results from her research on the routines of home for older women, demonstrated personal control attained through a continuation of life patterns that involved their routines of homemaking which were a part of their history of creating their home environment. The continuation of familiar life patterns involved their routines of housecleaning, cooking and general light maintenance of the home, which were also referred to as their responsibilities of the home. Other familiar patterns were involved with living close to conveniences such as stores in order to continue basic shopping for personal items and small needs such as gifts for others (Howell, 1994).

Researchers who have studied personal control through continuation of life patterns as an element of home have found that having personal responsibilities that encourage daily patterns of involvement enhanced this aspect. The simple matter of needing to rise in the morning in order to make one's coffee and toast was reported as a responsibility that enhanced personal control. The choice to even do nothing in a day was reported as an example of a continuation of a life pattern enhancing personal control as an experience of home. One such report is from a phenomenological study by Rendon, Sales, Leal and Pique (1995) whose qualitative research focused on the lived experience of aging for community-dwelling elders in Valencia, Spain. The study involved audio taped, semi-structured interviews with nine community-dwelling elders, both men and women, ranging in age from seventy-one to eighty-three years. Rendon et al. (1995) found that people reported positive feelings of being at home through the personal control of choosing to participate in the responsibility of caring for their surroundings, thus continuing their life long patterns of responsibility. For those who experienced significantly reduced physical ability, they still continued in a limited way to sweep their floors, and dust their possessions. Their continuation of familiar life patterns, in a modified fashion due to declining abilities, enhanced their sense of personal control as an element of home.

Similarly, the participants in the study by Damsma et al. (1998) reported that taking the responsibility for answering the door and watering the household plants in shared Adult Family Living homes assisted them in attaining a sense of personal control through continuation of the daily patterns of their former homes. Participation in normal daily activities encouraged the feeling of participation in responsibilities that were meaningful aspects of daily living.

Personal control is enhanced when people feel they have routines in their personal care that follow their familiar patterns, as in the case of aging people with declining health (Magilvy, Congdon, Nelson and Craig, 1992). Magilvy et al. conducted qualitative research, involving rural older people receiving home care. Participants described their experience of home care, partly through answering questions from the interviewer and partly through interpreting for the interviewer photographs taken of their home care experience at a previous occasion. They emphasized rural cultural norms that included enhancing personal control through maintenance of familiar personal routines. This included how and when they would receive their home care. Their personal control through continuation of their patterns of self care, even as they received care from others in their home, was of prime importance in their experience of home (Magilvy et al., 1992).

Home as Relationship

A much-cited element of home is a place where people are able to be in relationship. Researchers report on the importance of (a) a physical environment that is conducive to attainment of relationships with others, (Dovey, 1985; Howell, 1983b; Kivett, 1986; Norris-Baker & Scheidt, 1994; Zingmark et al., 1995) and (b) having supportive networks that facilitate relationships (Toyama, 1988; Aller & Coeling, 1995; Groger, 1995; Damsma et al., 1998).

The places people call home have been studied as to the degree of satisfaction for the residents, with indication of the importance of a physical setting in which the use of space facilitates interaction and relationship between people. Dovey (1985) reported that building relationships required an atmosphere and space that promoted interaction between people and provided opportunities for privacy. She found that the building standards of modern times neglected the need for homes that encourage healthy social connections and privacy between the people who live in them. For example, low square footage in the building of "housing projects" for the poor and shared washrooms and tub rooms in institutions for the aged were seen as causing crowding and lack of privacy. The result of this neglect was severe social and psychological disruption given the relationship inadequacy of some home environments (Dovey, 1985).

The issue of use of space was also captured in Howell's (1983a) case studies of housing modifications among working-class families in East Boston, Massachusetts, where she reported on the kitchen as a place where relationship was enhanced. People reported on the kitchen as the gathering place for people to share coffee and relate, in contrast to the living room with the television where people gathered but did not relate to each other. Howell (1983b) also reported people's experience of home as having surroundings that allowed them to offer space to their grown children and their families for visiting. She found that home was experienced when interior space allowed for family meals around a common table, facilitating the establishment of family rituals such as gatherings that enhanced relationships.

Similarly, others have found that having the space to offer a home to others and for accommodating family on their visits was a means of enhancing relationship. In their study of being at home throughout the life span, Zingmark et al. (1995) found that an important aspect of home was continuing relationships through sharing the home with adult children and family for visits and on special occasions.

Kivett, (1986) in her examination of aging in a rural place, found that the physical context held a distinctive perspective for rural people. Home was enhanced through the rural person's relationship with the physical environment that included their home and the land surrounding it. The experience of home was enhanced through relationship to the land by being in touch with the soil and "having roots", often with land ownership going back several generations within a family. Similarly, Norris-Baker and Scheidt (1994) found that the relationship to the land that the older rural people had was a significant element of home. Their qualitative research involved open-ended interviews with twenty-four older people living in four rural towns in Kansas, supported by more informal structured conversations, archival research, participant observation, tours of the community with residents and photography. The participants reported that the experience of home was enhanced by relationship with their land. For most of the older people this meant a continued residency on their land and a recreational relationship with the land and nature rather than the "working" relationship of farming or growing for feeding the family.

Studies of older people living in Adult Family Homes and in long term care institutions have found that relationship with other people is of importance as an element of home. Relationship was experienced through feelings of connection between those providing care and those receiving the care as well as between the residents themselves. For example, in Aller and Coeling's (1995) qualitative research, they interviewed eight people living in a long term care facility in the United States and found that the social environment was one of the factors that affected the person's quality of life. Although this study was not directed at the experience of home, the results indicated that the participants experienced their quality of life in relation to their experience of living in the nursing home environment. The older people reported that they placed importance on helping other residents who were more in need than they were. They further stated that caring for themselves and caring for others enhanced their feelings of being in relationship thus giving them relationships that promoted their experience of home.

Other studies involving people living in shared care settings found that social and outgoing people usually valued relationships more. Groger (1995), in studying how people make nursing home to be a "home", found that people who associated "home" with family and social relationships found it easier to make the nursing home into their home through the relationships they nurtured there. For the residents in the Adult Family Living and Assisted Living situations in the study by Damsma et al. (1998), the experience of home was enhanced through the encouragement of the care providers to be involved in relationship with others in the home. The providers valued sharing daily activities and common experiences, such as situations of laughter and humour and "household" decision-making. They saw these experiences as a means to establish relationship as an element of home, among the residents themselves and between the residents and the providers.

Conclusion

The literature review for this research involved examining a variety of disciplines to ascertain each study's meaning of home. Similarities in the findings of studies across disciplines were obvious, with the findings of belongingness, significant things, personal control and relationship constructing the meaning of home. The review allowed the construction of a more complete picture of home because of having visited each of the areas.

The concept of home in the literature is comprised of the elements of belongingness, of being surrounded by familiar things, of personal control, and of being in relationship. Although these four elements are presented as distinct from each other for the purpose of clarity in the literature review, some inter-relatedness is inescapable. They were reported in various studies with equal relative importance as the experience of home.

The element of belonginess emerged throughout the literature as also being composed of both "being surrounded with significant things and with "relationships with others or with nature". The element of having significant things was also reported as supporting "relationship with people and times of the past". The element of personal control was the one element of home that appeared in the literature to stand alone without the overlap experienced by the other three constructs. It may be that researchers were able to isolate the particular components of personal control as an element of home, thereby providing a distinction between it and other required elements of home.

In reflecting on the literature that documented the three constructs of home that related to each other, questions arose as to the overlaps and distinctions between them.

Perhaps there were elements of these constructs that had not been revealed by previous studies that would provide clarity among them. If other elements of the three constructs existed, they could provide a distinction among the elements that would possibly clarify them more distinctly, such as has been done with the element of personal control.

The literature discussed rural people and home and older people and home, but few studies existed of older rural people and home. In the existing literature the four elements were reported as pertaining to home, but again the question arose as to possible distinctions between them. It appeared that personal control was a determinant of home for rural people and older people, along with the other equally important constructs of belongingness, significant things and relationship. The question remained as to the possibility of unreported elements within the three constructs that may provide further clarity specific to the older rural person. The four elements discussed in the various disciplines of the literature may not form the main or only elements of home.

If the four elements reported in relevant literature are the four main constructs of home, it has yet to be determined whether any one or more of the four can be absent and the older person continue to experience home. Although some of the research literature includes older rural participants, there remains a scarcity of current research devoted to the concept of home for this particular group. The question that emerged from the review of literature sought to discover the experiences of home for older rural people. As I anticipated people relating their experiences of home, I envisioned gaining a general sense of their experiences in order to contribute to the field in an academic way. I wished to describe the experience of home to people who were preparing their rural elders for a move to a new living setting or who were in a position to influence the living settings of older rural people.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Before the research question was formed, I knew from reading and from a personal philosophy of practice, that this research needed to take place in the natural setting, and would involve explaining a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This knowledge led to the choice of qualitative research, and more specifically, phenomenology as the methodology for the approach. A qualitative study was chosen because of the nature of the research question which involves a journey into a particular topic to describe what is happening, in this case, what the experience of home is to the older person (Cresswell, 1998).

A phenomenological approach was chosen to address the question of understanding the experience of home. The approach was appropriate for this research given that people were asked to reflect on their experience of home, providing a thoughtful personal account of the experience that leads to an understanding of the meaning of home.

Phenomenology

A phenomenological study focuses not on the life of an individual but rather on a concept or phenomenon for individuals, such as the study of the experience of home. The most appropriate means of obtaining this understanding was through in-depth interviews with older people in their homes, supported by photographs taken during the first visit as directed and approved by the individuals. These methods provided a visual and verbal avenue for the participants to express themselves. Interviewing and photography culminated with specific descriptions of the experiences of home, followed by a thematic description of the phenomenon as interpreted from the data collected.

Incorporated is van Manen's (1990) conceptualization of hermeneutic phenomenology which includes the interpretative element (hermeneutics), and the descriptive element (phenomenological) of the lived experience. As described by van Manen (1990), "lived experience is the breathing of meaning" (p. 36), the examination of the lived experience becomes one which is explicated "through a process of reflection on its meaning" (p 35). Using the hermeneutic tradition, "the researcher and the participant enter into a relationship that becomes a process involving both of them as co-participants in co-construction of a description and interpretation of the meaning of the individual's experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

This study was conceptualized within an ecological model of health promotion practice which holds the premise that interactions between human beings and the environment are seen as multiple reciprocal interactions, encompassing family, community, culture, physical and social environment (Green, Richard & Potvin, 1995). From study of the health promotion field and the ecological model and from assisting older people, their families and caregivers, in clinical and educational settings, and living with the reality of the aging people in my own family, the significance of multiple contexts and the circularity of interactional effects as discussed by Wright & Leahey (1987) was recognized. The understanding of home from the emic (insider) point of view allowed for the consideration of the interactions between the individual, their family members, community and the culture of their rural environment in which they have made their home. The meaning of home as expressed by the participants was an accumulation of the reciprocal effects of multiple interactions over their lifetime between all of these components.

An assumption of this mode of inquiry is that individuals are a pivotal point of the study, and the uniqueness of each person is recognized when working with the insider's point of view. I believe that older people are often marginalized as a group, experiencing the effects of ageism by having a limited voice in matters that are important to them. Phenomenology was appropriate as a methodology for the study in order to acknowledge the expertise of the participant and to provide an avenue for the voice of the individual to be heard. Hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology was chosen as appropriate in its acknowledgment that humans have the ability to form meanings through living in the world. The intent of this study was to use this mode of inquiry to understand the meaning of home, based on the aim of phenomenology which is to discover the nature of meanings of everyday experiences and the aim of hermeneutics which is to provide an interpretive element of the phenomenon.

My interest in delving beyond the tangible aspects of home to individuals led to this study of the phenomenon of being at home. This included gaining an understanding of the more intangible aspects of home that provide health enhancing, positive attachments to home. My experience of witnessing older people lose the feeling of "being at home" when moved to care settings that prompted my need to understand the meaning of home to older people.

The results of all research must pass the test of credibility. After the research, the researcher needs to ask the participants if the results are an accurate account of the data they provided. The trustworthiness of the findings is accomplished by rigorous attention to data collection, building and ensuring credibility in the researcher's inquiry (Morse & Field, 1995; Patton, 1990).

The terms of trustworthiness and rigor are used when the inquiry is naturalistic, and credibility is being measured. These terms are used when asking if the qualitative study is believable, accurate, and "right" (Cresswell, 1998). Rigor refers to the level of accountability and accuracy employed by the researcher in the collection and analysis of the data, while trustworthiness applies to the data itself, the findings and conclusions reached by the researcher. For there to be trustworthiness in the findings there must be rigor in how the research has been done.

"The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood then as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). The use of interviews, photographs, fictional and academic literature, field notes and journal provided the multiple methods of gathering qualitative data to ensure consistency of material. Triangulation, the use of multiple means of data collection, ensured rigor with a consistency of the results. I knew that a responsibility lay in attending to the trustworthiness and rigor of the study.

The discussion of data collection and its analysis needed to assure the reader that the findings are trustworthy. This assurance takes place with attention to the four areas of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability.

Credibility

The credibility of this study was established by the extensive interview process, research committee debriefing, and the review of existing literature. The process involved relating the findings to participants, colleagues, older acquaintances and will be presented in more detail in the discussion of the data analysis.

Credibility is established in qualitative inquiry when the findings and the interpretations of the phenomenon, as presented by the researcher, are immediately recognized by the people who have had the experience as their own. As stated by Sandelowski (1986) in a discussion on how credibility is established in qualitative inquiry "...when it presents such faithful descriptions or interpretations of a human experience that the people having the experience would immediately recognize it from those descriptions or interpretations as their own" (p. 30).

Included in the data gathering was a reading of novels and poetry that portrayed people adapting, creating or experiencing home as a significant event, excerpts of which will be included in the discussion in Chapter V. The descriptions by the authors added credibility as themes emerged from the novels and poetry that supported the emerging themes from the data gathered during the research interviews.

Transferability

Sandelowski (1986) comments, "...every research situation is ultimately about a particular researcher in interaction with a particular subject in a particular context" (p. 31). Transferability refers to the correspondence of the findings from a particular inquiry to other contexts and with other participants (Guba, 1981). It is admitted in a phenomenological study that since only a small number of individuals are interviewed, the information arising from this perspective is bound both to the context and time of the particular study.

From writings of qualitative researchers the task is not to point to the transferability but "…provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer, to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). In an endeavor to attain a "rich and thick" description, increasing the likelihood of transferability, the technique of purposeful sampling was used, discussed in greater detail in the section on sampling.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is reached by maintaining a detailed audit trail of a study. As described by Guba (1981), the audit trail is a documentation of the processes by which decisions were made by the researcher around the collecting, analyzing, and interpretation of the data. A meticulous audit trail needs to be maintained, verifying the dependability of the research. Guba (1981) instructs "The degree to which procedures used fall within generally accepted practice…"establishes the confirmability (p. 87). A confirmable inquiry authenticates its dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The audit trail for this study includes descriptions of the rationale and procedures utilized in making decisions around the sampling, data collection, data analysis, and the writing of the findings. These are discussed in detail in later sections.

Neutrality is one of the keys to confirmability. The research presents the experiences of the participants and maintains freedom from the researcher's biases. In qualitative research the researcher is the main instrument. As will be discussed, the research audit trail ensured confirmability, recording the subjectivity of the researcher as is required (Patton, 1990). A practice of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, as suggested by Guba (1981) revealed underlying assumptions that informed the researcher in going about the inquiry in the manner chosen. In the detailed discussion of the audit trail, the assumptions will be discussed. Confirmability was further enhanced through journaling feelings and concerns, and dialoging with peer researchers and professional colleagues.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative researchers at each step of the study experience face ethical considerations. They surface during data collection as well as in the analysis and in reporting the results of the study (Cresswell, 1998). The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics, University of Alberta prior to data collection.

It is imperative during qualitative research that no deception about the nature or purpose of the study be encountered. A description of the purpose of the research (Appendix A) and consent to participate were signed with a copy provided to the participants (Appendix B). The researcher's copies have been kept in a secured location separate from the data so that names cannot be associated with the audio tapes, transcripts or any photographs. For further confidentiality, the transcriber of the audio recordings was required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix D).

Although the risks and benefits of participating in the study were minimal, they were discussed with each participant. A risk could have been the rekindling of sadness attached to home life such as memories of deceased loved ones or severed relationships within the family. Although there were no direct benefits for the participants, the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about home might have helped them to provide an understanding for those who experience relocation in later life or who plan "home-like" care for older rural individuals. Referral to appropriate professional health or social services was available if any concerns were expressed that required intervention during participation in the study. This was not a need for these participants (Appendix E).

When prospective participants were referred, permission for the referral was confirmed with the referring person. It was also confirmed that the prospective individual had been provided with the initial information about the purpose of the study. On a positive reply, the information for telephone contact was provided. The referring person was thanked for their assistance and reminded that there would not be a contact with them again about the referred individual. The researcher would not inform them if the person agreed or declined to participate.

The anonymity of the participants in human research is paramount to being protected, but in this study was waived by the individuals who agreed in writing to photographs that may identify them or their home (Appendix C). The participants understood that they had two opportunities to refuse the use of photography and such a refusal did not impair their participation in the study.

Tape recordings, photographs, transcriptions and field notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet with no identifying names attached. Only the researcher knew the link between the assigned codes, the photographs and the participant's name. Copies of the summary of results were offered to all participants (Appendix F).

Overview of the Study

To answer the questions, seven in depth interviews were conducted. In order to obtain data that captured the lived experience of these older individuals and their meaning of home, a small sample size with in depth interviews was necessary. Following each interview detailed transcribing and analysis of the interviews was required which also necessitated the use of a small sample size. In this study as in all phenomenological research, a nonrandom sampling procedure was used as the results do not generalize, but remain unique to the individual participants. What follows is a description of the type of sampling and interviewing procedures that were used.

Sampling and Procedures

Men and women who were 70 years of age or older and lived independently in a rural setting were sought as participants. This age was chosen as a minimum because this demographic group is closest in age to the group at risk for losing the experience of home due to relocation. This group is also most likely to be living in a home where they have maintained their feeling of being at home, providing a rich and current experience of home. Of those who are aged 65 to 74 years, 5% reside in an institution compared with 46% of persons aged 85 and over, residing in institutions (Lindsay, 1997). It is believed the sample of individuals over 70 years are the most suitable participants for this study since they are closest to the age group most likely to experience relocation from their home of choice along with the possible accompanying loss of the experience of home.

Seven initial interviews included nine people, two couples and five individuals. This sample, according to Morse (1994), is an ideal number for a phenomenological study of people who are involved in a similar experiences, in this case, living independently, currently in their own home, in a rural setting. The sample selection was purposeful, with participants sought who could best describe their meaning of home according to the needs of the study, their willingness to be involved and their ability to provide rich descriptions of the experience under study (Morse & Field, 1995; Skodol-Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). "Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (Cresswell, 1998). This sampling provides limits to ensure manageability by the researcher and a quality assurance of data that reflects the meaning of home to a particular population. This is not to say that other populations would not have worthwhile input but in order to focus this study, limits must be established to ensure the focus and the abundant description that is sought.

The exact sample size necessary is impossible to know before commencing the research. The data determines the sample size that is necessary to develop themes as they emerge, until saturation of the data is reached. The inclusion criteria for this sample were: rural dwelling people age 70 years and older, living independently in their home, and able to provide a description of their meaning of home. For the purpose of the research, rural community is defined as a town of less than 3,500 in population or a home situated within a radius of 25 kilometres of a rural town. In order to obtain rich data, the sample included males and females from various home living situations. Sampling took place across the phenomenon of types of independent home situations providing data that is varied and plentiful, adequately providing divergent experiences of home. Participants were solicited who represented rural dwelling people who were in a town or village, on a farm, recently relocated, in one home for a long time, and relocated several times. All participants lived within the David Thompson Health Region for ease of access by the researcher.

For referrals, the researcher approached key community groups and individuals that were in contact with the prospective sample. Community health personnel, managers of rural Family and Community Supports Services programmes and local seniors' groups were approached requesting their assistance in referring people to the researcher whom they believed met the criteria of the study. These key contacts were asked to give the researcher's name and telephone number to prospective participants asking them to contact the researcher. The key contact person was also given the option of gaining the prospective participant's permission to refer their name and telephone number to the researcher if the individual would prefer contact to be initiated by the researcher. All eventual participants requested that the key contact provide their name and telephone number to the researcher for the initial contact.

The response was more positive than expected. Ten individuals called to provide names and telephone numbers of prospective participants who they had spoken to about the research and who had agreed to be contacted for more information. All potential participants who were not appropriate respondents were screened by the researcher in consultation with the referral agent prior to any contact with the prospective participant. For example, a man who had recently been widowed was screened due to the intent of the referring person who believed the participation in the research would assist him with his grieving. The researcher decided that this man was not in a position at present to reflect on the meaning of home, and that the point of this research was not therapeutic.

Potential participants who were deemed to meet the criteria were contacted by telephone. Once telephone contact was established with the potential participants, assessment for acceptance to the study occurred, using the previously discussed criteria for involvement. The purpose of the study, the rights of the participant, and the credentials of the researcher were discussed and a mutually agreed upon date and time were established for the first interview.

Characteristics of the Participants

The age range for the participants was from 73 years to 88 years. The type of home and length of residence was different among the participants. The sample consisted of: a man who had never lived anywhere but on the farm property where he presently lived with his wife since they married; a man who, with his wife, lived in a new duplex in a small town, the first to be built in a "seniors only" sub-division, following thirty years in their former home in a nearby town; a widow who relocated from a small town in a neighbouring province three years earlier, where she had lived first on a farm for twenty years then in a small town for thirty years; a woman who had lived on her farm since she was married fifty years earlier; a man and his wife whose house was small town and had recently moved to an urban centre with a population of 60,000 six months earlier. This particular couple identified themselves as rural living people due to their long attachment to their former rural home, especially given the short length of time since they had relocated to a small condominium apartment due to health reasons, and were therefore included in the study. One widow in the study had lived in the same house in a rural village for sixty years and another woman who had lived with her husband in a house in town for fifteen years following a move after farming for thirty years. The sample included five married individuals, two of whom included their spouse in the interview and in addition, two widowed women.

All participants were Caucasian. Everyone but one presently owned their homes, and although some participants recently experienced a move to a new home, spent at least twenty years living in one home at some point in their adult lives. Three of the nine people moved a great deal during their early married years, and one has moved twice since she married. All were married at least 40 years to their spouse, except one of the participants who was married only twenty years before she was widowed. All had children from their marriages. The participants were able physically although two relied on family assistance and home help for caring for their house cleaning and yard work. All were cognitively well, able to process information and reflect on their lives to varying degrees. Due to their social networks and family involvement the participants were well known in their respective communities, and came to the attention of the researcher.

Procedure for Initial Telephone Contact

Once permission for contact was received from the key contact (referring person) the prospective participant was called. The name of the person who had referred them was provided as the link between the participant and the researcher, and the following information about the study was given.

> "This study is an attempt to understand the meaning of home to older rural people who are living independently. My hope is that the understanding of home from this study might be able to help older rural people who need to move from one home to another in their later life take their feeling of being at home along with them. I will be the interviewer and I will ask you to help me to understand what home

> means to you. The interview is in your home and is tape recorded with your permission. Your name will not be used in the final report. If you are receiving services from any helping agency at this time, your services will not be affected either by refusing or agreeing to participate in this study. The interview will be no more than 2 hours and you may choose to stop the interview at any time.

After questions were answered to the satisfaction of the older person, they were asked if they were interested in participating in the study. All of the people contacted responded positively, and mutually convenient dates and times were arranged for the interview in their home.

Data Collection

In a phenomenological study it is possible to add information from literary and artistic depiction of the meaning of home, obtained from novelists, poets, photographers and painters to enrich the data. In addition to such references, the initial plan was that participants would be requested during initial telephone contact, to choose a photograph they may have taken that they felt depicted something about the "specialness" of home. They would then be asked to discuss it with the researcher during the interview. As will be described later, this technique was found to be cumbersome in the first interview and not used in the second interview. As it turned out, it was not required, as participants naturally brought forward photographs depicting something they were describing to me during the course of the interview. This natural emergence of photographs depicting the participant's meaning of home was timely and meaningful in a stronger way than that originally planned.

Participants were asked at the end of each interview if there was any scene or scenes in their home that represented for them their meaning of home or represented something significant about their feeling of home. Permission was requested to photograph the scene. They were assured that the photographs would not be used in the study until they saw the developed picture and gave approval for its use. They were also reminded that if the photo was used in the study they could be identified as participants from the content. All were comfortable with the use of photography and the possibility of lost anonymity. As a matter of fact, participants reported that they felt the use of photographs provided a "kind of back up" to the words they searched for to express their meaning of home (field notes, March 16, 1998). They felt there would be more clarity to their meanings if pictures could be shown that provided visual images to support their words.

The Interview

For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involves in-depth interviews (Cresswell, 1998). These in-depth interviews lasted from 1 hour to 1.75 hours. Care was taken to monitor the length of the interview and the participants' fatigue level to prevent tiring.

Self reflection on the perception of older people, rural living and perception of the meaning of home, was preparatory to interviews with the participants. This step assisted with the bracketing (setting aside personal preconceptions) that was necessary to proceed with the interview process and analysis of the data. The past 18 years of experience and interviewing skills from working with older individuals and their families was used to contain the discussion and focus conversation on the interview intention as far as tactfully possible.

Upon arrival at the individual's home we engaged in small talk that consisted of introductions, the drive to their home, the weather and studies that led to the research. Most participants wanted to know where my home was, given that I was a University of Alberta student interviewing Central Alberta residents. Upon learning of the 1 ½ hours drive one way to classes, small talk continued around travel experiences. This provided them with time to briefly interview me, and to develop a beginning level of trust.

Following the brief rapport building time a copy of the introductory information (Appendix A) was provided to them and reviewed, reading it through aloud to account for any vision or literacy concerns. The print was enlarged for the benefit of the participants. I reviewed the interview process, possible consequences of participating in the study, the provisions that were made to maintain confidentiality, the time the interview would take and allowance for withdrawal at any point in the study. The provision for withdrawal was stressed to ensure that these individuals did not feel pressured to participate. They were informed that the referring person would not know whether they participated unless informed by the participant themselves, thus ensuring that any services they might be receiving would not be affected. I offered to forward copies of the final summary of results to those who wished a copy.

The participants were informed that the interviews would only be tape recorded with their permission. None of the participants refused and many added that they had been recorded at other times, some with encouragement from their children to record their life experiences. They were all relaxed and accepting of the recording. They were informed that someone would transcribe the tapes other than myself who had signed a form of confidentiality (Appendix D) agreement with me. The individuals were told that I would ask at the end of the interview for permission to take photographs, under their direction, of scenes with special significance to them related to the meaning of home. They were assured that if I wanted to use the resulting photograph in the study, I would return to show them the developed photograph and ask for their written consent (Appendix C) for use. Consent was requested also from any other person living in their home, which in all of these cases was a spouse. If participants did not wish the photograph to be used they were informed that it would be left with them along with the negative. Following this they were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B) if they agreed to participate in the study.

I answered any questions, and the individual, and in some cases a spouse in attendance, signed the consent form. In some cases, individuals wanted their spouse present during the interview, citing the fact that they had lived together for so many years that it was difficult to think of speaking of "home" without this person present. A few times the spouse interjected a few words, clarifying dates and names but for the most part, the one individual was the interviewee. For people who have been together for so many years and who live in retirement very closely intertwined, being together for the interview provided the ease and normalcy required for a level of comfort in this personal interview. In two cases, both members of the couple wanted to be interviewed jointly, with both participating vigorously and equally in the interview process.

In designing the interview, the interviewer needs to be mindful of not leading the participant in a preconceived direction, therefore the design for interviewing was a guided interview format was chosen. This format is not as informal as the conversational interview, nor is it as structured as the formal interview where all questions are prepared in advance and administered in a strictly sequential manner. The guided format sought to encourage the expressiveness of the participant with over-arching topics that would guide the sharing of the experience of home, thus ensuring that relevant and meaningful data was collected. Vigilance was maintained to ensure participants responses were not forced or led in directions that would reflect my thoughts rather than those of the participant (Patton, 1990). This vigilance requires excellence in interviewing skill, therefore a review on completion of each interview took place, including listening to the tape recordings in order to evaluate and improve the quality of the next interview.

The interview questions were prepared prior to the interviewing stage of this study. Once the questions prepared to guide the interview were asked, further questions were determined by the descriptions and thoughts expressed by the participant. Open ended questions were used to elicit the detail from their description of home and its meaning. The prepared questions were as follows:

> 1) I asked you to see if you could find a picture that you think shows the important part of home to you that you could show me and tell me about at the beginning of this interview. Were you able to find something? Can you tell me how the scene in this picture connects with home? (this question was primarily planned as an icebreaker to encourage reflection on the meaning of home, and as a result of unplanned neglect of using it

in the second interview and the discovery that the question was not effective as an icebreaker, it was used in only the first interview)

2) I wonder if there ever has been a time that it felt good to be where you lived, that you felt at home? Can you tell about that time?

3) Could you tell me what "feeling at home" means to you?

4) Is there a time or place that you have felt most at home?

5) What do you think made your home start to feel like home after you moved into it?

6) What are your thoughts on what it is that makes a house a "home"?

These questions were guiding questions, asked when appropriate to stimulate or return the interview to its purpose of reflecting on the experience of home. As commented earlier, the first question was not the primary focus of the research, included to encourage a relaxing time of general conversation and to lead into the questions directed at the home experience. In the first interview I felt this question caused the interview to have a fragmented start and made it more difficult for the participant to move into the interview about home in a natural manner. It seemed that the picture was discussed, then a leap was made to the purpose of the interview, thus providing evidence that the purpose of this question was not being met. Following review of the data, including the transcript, tape recording and field notes, a decision was made to leave this question out of future interviews. It was found that the beginning of the second interview flowed more naturally and comfortably. The next two questions were asked to begin the interview, and provided a focus for the participant, who often provided responses that led directly to the next questions. The participant's "lead in" allowed an opportunity for probing questions that led to a deeper level of discussion about home. The guiding questions served their purpose of providing starting places, with other questions arising from the content of the participant's reflections.

The open ended questions allowed the participants to describe their experiences of home in their own way, including the events, people, things or symbols that they felt were part of the "home" experience. Methods of interviewing that elicited the rich and varied exploration of the experience of home included paraphrasing the participant's response, requesting them to tell me more about a certain phrase they had used or simply encouraging them to continue. These methods allowed a casual non-threatening type of probing and questioning that was comfortable for the individual and encouraged the type of story telling that often takes place during an older person's reminiscence.

Use of Photography

Photographs have been used in research to gain a clearer vision of the meaning of home, and "add a holistic, visual sense to the phenomenon being studied" (Magilvy, Congdon, Nelson & Craig, 1992, p. 253). Photographs capture nonverbal data in the way that audio tapes gather verbal descriptions, and when combined with field notes, can serve as a researcher's notebook (Collier & Collier, 1986).

At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there were any places in the home or its surroundings that depicted a special feeling of "hominess" or signified their meaning of home. At this point the participants were comfortable with the interviewer and the process and were willing to share a visual record of their understanding of the experience of home. The participants were reminded that they were free to deny the photography, but all responded positively to the suggestion of a visual record. Each chose the scene or scenes they felt would describe their meaning, as only they knew what significance scenes held for them. Some of the participants chose to be in their photograph, others did not, primarily due to the type of picture they were suggesting.

All participants responded eagerly to the use of photography to depict and provide visual meaning to the words they had shared. Many participants indicated that they wondered if they had expressed themselves adequately. Although I provided assurances that there were no "right or wrongs" in the interview, they may have felt that their visual representation helped to support their verbal participation, as documented in the literature on the use of photography reviewed for this study.

Interview Conclusion

Completion of data gathering involved closure of each interview, respecting the effort the individual had made to disclose personal thoughts and feelings, expressing gratitude for their time and asking if there was any discussion that was left unfinished. The interview was terminated when the individual indicated that they had exhausted the topic and had no other reflections on their experience of home they wished to discuss. As the interview ended, the participants were thanked for their involvement and assured that they would be called for a second meeting. The purpose of the second meeting was to clarify any of the information gathered, confirm emerging themes, as well as to view their developed photographs for permission to use them in the study. All participants stated that they appreciated this process and agreed to it.

Referral to an appropriate professional for counseling or follow-up intervention was not necessary for any of the participants (Appendix E). One participant was already in close connection with a local senior's centre where he received support.

Thus far I have described the process I used to conduct the interviews and, in earlier sections, I described the procedures for sampling and initial telephone contact. The methodology was the guide conducting the research and accomplishing the outcomes of the study. This guide helped with negotiating the path to data analysis, and prepared me for returns to participants for clarification and confirmation along the road of analysis.

Data Analysis

Many who have undertaken qualitative research warned of the formidable task of analyzing text and multiple forms of data. So began this segment of the journey, with great care and significant fearfulness. van Manen's Researching Lived Experience (1990) became the guidebook, leading to various others in this field of research who had traveled where I was heading (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Wolcott, 1994b; Cresswell, 1998).

I was aware that the experiences of the participants in the study had been entrusted to me, with a responsibility to act as the conduit for their voice through the text and photographs of the study. A heightened awareness of this responsibility caused anxiety, but also ensured diligent treatment of the data.

Field notes were the record of my observations from the interviews, telephone calls, photography and meetings with colleagues and committee members. Field notes were made immediately following the interviews so as not to lose accuracy during any intervening time. Following the first interview, a note was made that resulted in the adding of a guiding question that could be used in future to assist the participant as they reflected on their experiences of home. The field notes following the first interview record that "the interview felt choppy and it was difficult to guide the participant toward a reflection on her experience of home" (field notes, March 2, 1998). I concluded that the use of pictures and the guiding questions was too open-ended for some people to begin, therefore other questions were added that could direct the participant who was having difficulty with the topic. Along with a more direct question to assist those having difficulty with the topic, the use of a picture to open the discussion was eliminated following the second interview, again as a result of reviewing the field note data.

Adding the question, "Is there a time or place when you felt most at home?" elicited details of the first home one participant had lived in following his marriage. Although the home was rustic and small, it's existence continued to stir feelings of home, including inconvenient but intimate space for having friends and family visit, his favourite chair in the corner of the room, sharing of manual labour with neighbours and knowing the community.

The importance of recording the scene of the interview and any salient features of the setting became apparent on review of the field notes. Following the first two interviews it was noted that the interview setting was the kitchen, this was to become significant as interviews progressed. The recording of the kitchen setting provided a second level of data referring to the kitchen as significant in addition to the recorded words of the older people. One older person also shared with me in the interview that she was not attached to material possessions but as recorded in the field notes describing her home, a curio cabinet with glass doors held what I called "knick-knacks", many items including crystal and china figurines which were protected and on display (field notes, March 2, 1998). As other interviews took place and people spoke of their collections and items of significance decorating their homes, the noting of the first participant's curio cabinet helped me during a second meeting with this person to clarify her meaning of "material possessions. This provided her with the opportunity to explain that the collections in her cabinet were gifts and that they were indeed special to her. Her definition of material possessions was opulent home furnishings. Without the notation in the field notes, the distinction between special things and material possessions may not have been realized. This realization as a result of field notes ensured more diligence in clarifying meaning and recognition of my own bias in interpreting meanings for future interviews (field notes, March 16, 1998).

By the second interview, the guiding question "Is there a place that you feel most "at home"? was added to assist the person reflecting upon the experience of home. In the second and subsequent interviews, this question was responded to with stories of times spent with family and friends and having the physical space to be able to gather these people together for music and wiener roasts in a place such as the fire pit in the yard. I was able to use the questions to direct participants' reflections in an easier manner, without the "choppiness" of the first interviews as recorded in the field notes.

In the field notes of March 7, 1998, it is recorded that the researcher request had not been made for the participant to be prepared with a picture that represented home. It was also noted that the interview was not as "choppy" as the first, seeming to flow more easily, and as an added notation, the participant brought forth a picture, unsolicited, part way through the interview. He did this in order to add visual clarity to the experience he was describing, thus the decision to delete this technique in all subsequent interviews. An interesting point was that as recorded in the field notes, most participants produced pictures they had taken around their home that provided visual clarity to the experiences they were describing.

A note on April 8, 1998 indicated that thus far, the people who had been interviewed had lived in their home for an average of forty years. During a later discussion with the research committee about this observation it was decided that participants who had lived in their homes for a shorter time would assist in clarifying an emerging theme of longevity in one home being tied to feeling at home.

The research journal, as a second method of personal recording, was a repository for on-going reflections based on personal reactions, thoughts, and feelings generated throughout the study. This enhanced the data collection, providing background and detail to the study experience. One particular notation described the time after one interview that the participant offered to show me the basement and collections in addition to the one in her living area. During this "tour" she demonstrated the movable cupboard under the stairs that her husband had made to hold her preserves. I noted that "during the tour this woman made a gift of her preserves, giving to me an appreciation for her work. I noted that she wanted me to see many of her items stored in the basement, such as the antique kitchen table her daughter hopes to inherit (journal entry, March 30, 1998)." This was an instance that my own bias was noted as I too enjoy preserving and collecting, symbolic to me as an experience of home. The journal recording assisted in creating awareness of these feelings and experience of being at home, and prevented visiting personal feelings in the analysis of this person's interview.

The hermeneutic process of continual bracketing (setting aside) and re-bracketing of presuppositions and biases occurred throughout data collection and analysis. As data were collected this process involved moving to the data, and re-bracketing to ensure the integrity of the phenomena. I documented in the journal the ongoing re-bracketing process during data collection and analysis. At one point in the data collection process, reflection in a journal entry involved wondering about the difference between the terms of house and home (journal entry March 23, 1998). I noted that some of the experiences of home that the older people were relating to me sounded like spiritual references to home, such as death for some people being a "going home". These journaled thoughts added to my readings regarding the significance of home to the characters from Tolkien's The Hobbit (1937) and Rouse's (1978) translation of Homer's The Odyssey, such as the longing of The Hobbit to return to the safety of his home and the space his house afforded him, and the longing of Odysseus for his homeland and family caused me to reflect in the journal about my perception of home. I began to realize my usage of the terms house and home, a recognition that I did not use the terms interchangeably. Personally, home had a meaning for me that represented warmth, safety, a haven from outside forces and that house was the structure, the rooms, a colder term for shelter. I realized a personal assumption that the terms house and home were being used with distinctively different meanings by the participants of the study. This reflective journal entry caused an addition of another interview question that sought to clarify the participants' use of the terms house and home, thus keeping my own biases in check and clarifying meanings of the terms as we progressed.

The moving back and forth ensured congruency in the accuracy and truth of the actual experience as voiced by the participant. Careful documentation of all conversations and reflections was required. This was ensured through the diligent recording of field notes and journal entries, photographs of scenes representing the experience of home as directed by the participants, audio taping and transcribing of all interviews.

Progression of Analysis.

Cresswell (1998) explores general data analysis strategies advanced by three qualitative authors (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Wolcott, 1994b). These authors recommend a beginning step in analysis that I followed; listening to each audio-tape immediately on return home from the interview and adding to my field notes any information from the interview that enhanced the verbal recording. On receipt of the transcribed tape, I carefully checked the transcription with the audio-tape immediately, line by line. I began a general review of information, using the margins of the transcribed audio tapes for notations pertaining to my observations in field notes. I noted for example, the emphatic wave of the arm of the man pointing to the empty old house across his yard, where he and his wife began their life. Another notation refers to a point when a participant took a lengthy pause. I noted a look of sadness, then noted a smile as he stated that he was working on making it feel more like home by building a room in the basement for his children to stay when they visit. This part of the transcripts was given life by adding the field-noted expressions and gestures that the participant applied to emphasize his statements, such as smiling, and sad expressions. The fact that participants preferred that the interview took place in the kitchen was noted in the margins of the transcripts where they spoke of their kitchen as an important feature of being at home.

I read and reviewed the written material, moving back and forth amongst the data, as well as between the data and ongoing interviews, to obtain a sense of the data collected. This process was used following each interview and involved the beginning step of "intraparticipant analysis" as described by Morse and Field (1995, pp. 211-212). This analysis consists of immersion in the individual's interview data "reflecting on the data in its entirety" (Omery, 1983). If there were statements that seemed to be significant related to the meaning of home, these sentences were highlighted. Words such as "visiting", "meeting people", "knowing people and being known", "walking downtown and meeting and talking to people" were highlighted from one transcript. Trees, flowers, gardening, looking after the yard and garden, watching animals, were all stated and highlighted as having significance in the experience of being at home. Descriptive expressions were the significant statements as they related to the phenomenon and were "the core" of the experience as described by the participant. An important step following each interview was to begin to uncover thematic aspects in the transcripts by reading and re-reading the text, field notes and viewing the photographs, which included scenes of the fire pit where family gathered, the kitchen, comfortable chairs and collections of trinkets.

Following the initial interview, and the highlighting of thematic interpretations, I consulted with the thesis advisor and another member of the thesis committee for guidance in the chosen data collection and analysis processes, receiving feedback as a reliability check. My advisor agreed to the research process and added advice on clarifying some of the generalities that were arising from the guiding questions. I continued with the process of intraparticipant analysis following subsequent interviews, with regular guidance from the advisor and thesis committee members, discussing the significant statements that were emerging from the data.

van Manen (1990) speaks of a detailed or line-by-line mode of maintaining a close and detailed relationship with each sentence in the interview transcript. I trusted my intuition, as advised in van Manen's (1990) writings, approaching each sentence or sentence cluster with an eye that surveyed, and a ear that listened for prophetic phrases relating to the phenomenon. Reflecting on her experience of home, one woman described the importance of the kitchen as the place where everyone gathers and as the place where good talking happens. I began to gain a sense of the significance of this kitchen space within her experience of home. Reviewing each line in another transcript I was reminded of emphasized words that caught my breath when first heard during the interview. The participant told about the importance of participating in life and the reciprocal act of giving and taking that led to a sense of belonging as her experience of home. Another spoke of the trinkets and things he and his wife had amassed over the years and the importance of keeping most of these possessions and the memories they held, even in their move to a new home. This same man spoke of his hobby work in carpentry and the items he could produce by sawing a few boards.

As I continued with the intraparticipant analysis, the highlighted words, the reading and re-reading of each individual transcript, the reviewing of photographs, field notes and journal entries, words and phrases accumulated. These words and phrases were significant as indicated by the older person during the interview and I believed they were significant also, as I listened to and read the words they shared. It was now time to begin to review the commonalties among the interview data.

As data began to expand with subsequent interviews and intraparticipant analysis continued it was time to move to a second stage recommended by Morse and Field (1995); the interparticipant analysis in which an awareness of the common experiences among participants emerged from the data. Once the first three interviews were completed and the intraparticipant analysis revealed the meanings of home to the participants in the interviews, common phrases, statements and words began to emerge. During this segment of the analysis, common phrases such as "brought all of our things", "my collection is important", "that stuff is all from my family", "brought the important things," were highlighted. These phrases were then transcribed into a list, with each phrase or word given a number that signified the number of interviews the word or phrase was used by participants in describing their meaning of home. As interviews continued and other common phrases emerged, they were added to a list that fell within the phrase's category, or if there was no existing list at that point, then a new list was begun. For example, common phrases began to emerge such as "when the family comes to visit - that's home", "when we have room for family then it will feel like home", "we have room to put up visitors and they can have their own bathroom". At this point the lists generated thus far included those of stuff and things, choices, and gardening/nature, into which having family and visitors did not belong, therefore a separate list for phrases that fell into the category of space for family and visitors was created. Other phrases that had appeared to be common in the first three interviews did not emerge in subsequent interviews. One of these phrases was that of longevity of life in one home. As analysis progressed and the data was reviewed, with rereading of transcripts and review of the context of the common phrases, it was evident that for people who had lived in one home for most of their adult life, home was related to their length of time in that home. For others who had moved more often, the feeling of being at home was transportable, as they had witnessed through personal experience that the others who lived in one home most of their lives had not experienced. Thus, longevity in one home was eliminated from the common list.

Common statements and emerging themes are the "essence" of the phenomenon under study but it is also recognized that some themes may emerge that are not common to all. Although not everyone spoke of the significance of their favourite chair, all indicated in some way an importance of this item in their home, some more emphatically than others. One woman who stated that her chair was not important to her, chose to sit in her chair holding her cats for the photograph of a scene that represented her feeling of being at home. In four of the seven interviews, participants spoke strongly of their kitchen as a significant place in being at home and in all but one case, the kitchen was the first choice for interviewing to take place. In the instance that the kitchen was not the only choice, this may have been because it was in a condominium with a small working kitchen and stools at the counter of the breakfast nook. It was not where this couple normally ate or visited, but interestingly, it was after all where the interview took place, over a cup of coffee, after they deliberated between themselves as to the best place to sit.

Words and phrases that included some form of observing and tending living things, such as flowers, trees, vegetables, animals, were included in the list of relationship to nature. References to a personal impact on the home, whether it was decorating, the making of pillow covers, composting, or building a deck and creating a place to grow flowers were categorized into a list that was named responsibilities/competencies.

As the intraparticipant analysis evolved, common words and phrases among the participants pointed to home including the ability to make choices. People spoke of choosing what they ate, when and where. Five described the experience of home as closely tied to feeling in charge of their living space, being the decision-maker about work to be done; independent, while recognizing the need for support from others. As the commonalties emerged in the data from the reflections of the older people on their experience of home, there was a beginning sense of themes arising from the data.

Categories were derived by constantly comparing information such as the words and phrases of; “choice”, “kitchen”, “work to do”, “things to look after”, “visits from family and friends”, “making things look nice”, “trees”, “animals”, “gardens”, tasks associated with belonging to groups such as hosting meetings and taking food to luncheons. The process involved continual grouping of the words and phrases into similarities of category, continuous refinement of the categories, consequently developing a fit between with the data. Included with this analysis was the data revealed in the photographs taken following each interview.

Photographs.

As the photographs were developed I mounted them separately and noted in the margin beside them any field note material not captured in the transcribed tapes. Most participants discussed the importance of the scene they were directing me to photograph as captivated in their recorded interviews. These discussions occurred as they described their significant places of being at home. These places included an old stump of a tree that had been cut down years previously, honoured for its years of service as a mature tree now serving as a container for a plant display in summer. The note beside this mounted photograph is of this woman's look of nostalgia in describing the stump and of joy at being able to grow plants, and ready a display for her neighbours to admire.

Photographs were analyzed using the data analysis adopted for the transcribed interviews; making notations and searching for emerging themes. I observed the overall scene in the photograph then closely viewed the items within it, referring to my field notes and transcribed tape recordings for the words they used as they discussed and participated in the photography process.

In a photograph of an old house that sits empty on the property where an older man was born and continues to live in a newer house, I noticed the sturdiness of the structure and the surrounding trees. This man told me that this was the home that he most loved. In reviewing the transcript of his reflection of times in this home, it is noted that its appeal was the memories it held of raising family and working hard with few amenities. His words were aligned with the detail of this picture, a rustic house built to last, intact, the children's swing made from a old tire still hanging from the tree in the front yard.

Another photograph of one older person's collection of spoons displayed in the case her husband built reflected the words she used to describe her collection. Her husband's handiwork and the memories the spoons held were important experiences of home for her as noted in the review of the transcript. The photograph recorded the collection hung in the main living space of the home near the main door. This woman's emphasis on the significance of the memories of friends who brought her spoons and her own travels that added to the collection were confirmed viewing this photo.

Many other words of the older people were also confirmed through the visual display of their chosen scenes representing their experience of home. Another photograph of one person's family pictures hanging on the kitchen wall was described in the transcript as depicting his life's work. This man spoke of the responsibility of raising a family and felt he had been competent in this capacity. During this phase of analysis notes were made in the margin of the mounted photographs as to this man's feeling of responsibility in raising his family and sense of accomplishment, corresponding with the notes of the related text of his transcript.

Themes

Emerging from the highlighted lines of descriptive elements of home from each interview were the common words and phrases across interviews and common scenes or items between the photographs. These common statements, phrases and words were synthesized into the categories that were believed to thematically represent the meaning that the individuals ascribed to their experience of home. Further analysis involved the review of the photographs and the comparison of the items or scenes from the photographs to the words and phrases of the transcripts, searching for the commonalties.

As the common categories emerged between the transcripts and the photographs they were synthesized into words that represented what appeared to be the beginning themes. Animals to watch; trees to observe; kitchen for good talks; favourite chair; collections, treasures; preparing food for the ladies meeting; space for overnight stays; space for friends to visit; privacy; choice in daily activity; independence to do what one wanted to do; responsibility for caring for something; equality in relationships; began to emerge as themes.

At this point a meeting with the thesis committee provided the opportunity to discuss the findings and to test out the emerging themes. Relevant literature was discussed during this meeting that supported some of the themes identified. I was encouraged to continue with further data analysis, and to return to the research question that was to be answered. The next step was to return to the older people, with the developed photographs that required their permission for use in the final report.

Each participant and if applicable, their spouse, were shown the photographs taken following the first interview. They were asked to comment on the scene they chose, pointing out anything of significance in the photograph that they felt demonstrated their experience of home. Their responses confirmed their original reasons for choosing the scenes. Photographs shown to me were of trees, the fire pit with the picnic table for a family gathering for music and good times; the two easy chairs that held memories of times spent with a long deceased spouse; the kitchen as the centre of the home and the place where nurturing foods were prepared; the old house that held happy memories of entertaining; the flower garden that produced the spring buds that required care throughout the year; the collection of spoons gather by self and friends; the home that required tending to keep it fit for living. All of the older people gave permission to use their photographs in the dissemination of the research.

Discussed earlier is the hermeneutic tradition in which the researcher and the participant enter into a relationship as co-participants in co-construction of a description and interpretation of the meaning of the individual's experience. The work together as co-participants thus far had involved the reflections on home and the sharing of personal experiences of home, entering into the relationship that involved both the researcher and the participant in the co-construction of the description of the meaning of home. The interview was both a co-construction of the description but also involved the interpretive element necessary to the hermeneutic tradition. As the participants reflected on their experiences of home they then carried the reflections further by giving significance to some descriptions more than to others. For example, when one woman spoke of her experience of the kitchen as an important element of home she went further to the interpretive mode by explaining how the kitchen became the centre, where people were drawn. Others who spoke of the kitchen in a similar manner also provided an interpretive element by comparing it to other experiences then returning to the importance of the kitchen as the centre for problem solving and close talks. Some also experienced home in the kitchen, as the place to prepare food that nurtured others. The interpretive element ran throughout the descriptions of the experience of home. Thus, as individuals described their experiences of home, they provided interpretation to the experience during their reflection.

Some researchers gather a small group of their sample to work with them on the interpretive element and to enhance the credibility of the interpretation. This group method for co-constructing the interpretation of the meaning of home for the individuals of this study was more difficult given the transportation difficulties and geographical distances between the participants. The decision to approach each individual or couple once again to discuss the common statements or words and the themes that appeared to be emerging provided the opportunity to ask for their involvement. This was purposely not a formal credibility check because, as expected, given the experience of many years of working with older people, all were politely in agreement with the emerging themes presented for discussion. I believe it would take a longer relationship with these people for them to feel invested enough in the process to challenge the tentative findings presented for their comments. During these meetings I was alert for quizzical looks or other nonverbal indications that the findings were not "fitting" for the participants, but none was detected. I felt confident that all of the older people interviewed would have their stories reflected accurately within the text, and that my efforts to present resulting themes was a synthesis of the words they had used as descriptive and interpretive of their meaning of home. The words to be written would remain true to their words and pictures.

Consultation with the thesis committee members, professional colleagues, peers and people who have inquired about this research topic provided credibility checks throughout the research. During the latter stages of analysis the check on credibility became one of confirmation as people nodded knowingly and identified with the words of the older people and the emerging themes, as experiences they have had or read about in the literature.

The third stage of analysis was determining the interrelationships between themes. The purpose of this process was to seek interrelationships between the many themes that had emerged from the data. As stated by van Manen (1990), "Writing teaches us what we know and in what way we know what we know" (p. 127). The writing process of the research had thus far entailed documenting the words and phrases, the scenes of photographs, comparing the similarities between participants and beginning to write out descriptive quotes from the interviews. Responsive and reflective writing and re-writing reduced the great amounts of data into a living network of related experiences. As van Manen (1990) believed, the writing became an exercise of "re-thinking, re-flecting and re-cognizing", as the themes began to form. Connections began to form between discussions of nature, trees, watching wild animals, kitchen as centre, space for visiting and sleeping space for visitors, favourite chairs, and collection, possessions, treasures. These constructs seemed to describe relationships between people, with the self, to the environment. A second set of connections of a more active nature formed between words describing activities of kitchen as workplace, responsibility of caring for gardens, growing flowers and vegetables to give to others, caring for the home, for pets, having a task as a member of a club. A third category was that of making independent choices for the activities of every day life, feeling in control of the personal environment. Thus three themes emerged, encompassing the meaning of home to these individuals, one of relatedness and the second of purpose and the third of autonomy.

Referring again to my "guidebook", van Manen's Researching Lived Experience (1990), reflection continued on his discussion of seeing the themes in the meaning of the phenomenon being explored. I was unwavering in my attempts to present the interpreted lived experience of these older people through "insightful invention, discovery and formulation of a thematic understanding, not as a rule-bound process but a free act of seeing meaning" (van Manen, 1990, p. 79). Close consideration of the data as a whole continued by re-reading the transcripts, with the added feature of a review of significant words and phrases that had been highlighted and the categories that had been listed as common among the transcripts. Discussions of the emerging themes were held with my thesis advisor providing a time for consideration and explanation of the thematic interpretations. As reviewing continued, a sense of distinct themes emerged by collapsing some of the related but weak constructs into stronger, more descriptive and representative themes. The terms describing the activities of watching animals, trees, and appreciating growing things were collapsed into the construct of connection to nature. The construct of possessions, things and treasures arose from joining the construct of the attachment to the favourite chair to the construct of connection to collections and treasures that evoked memories to past times and people. The construct of kitchen as centre and workplace was separated into two distinct constructs, one of kitchen as the place where relationships are maintained and where the nurturing of others takes place and the other construct of kitchen where productive work takes place that enhances reciprocal relationships and participation. Room for overnight guests and hosting social gatherings were collapsed to a construct of hosting space. Responsibility as a construct encompassed the "work to do", the caring for the gardens and home maintenance and the hobbies that demanded time and attention to produce quality work. The need to be independent and able to make choices for regular daily activities whether they be for private time, certain meals or decorating the living space, became independence, choice and control.

I knew that the meaning formulated from the voice of the participants must illuminate the essential meaning of the phenomenon described. Discussion with colleagues provided a venue to hear myself aloud recounting the words as expressed by the older people. This resulted in further insights and the discovery and formulation of the thematic understanding.

In phenomenology one must be cautious not to "force" the data to fit into any preconceived themes, but to allow time for reflection on the data as a whole. Tesch (1987) provides a caution that only once the researcher is satisfied that all of the criteria have been met and the results of the analysis are right and solid can a theme be trustworthy and complete. In this study credibility was enhanced using the analysis process that has been discussed. The description and interpretation of the meaning of home is one that the participants, during the second meeting to discuss their responses to the emerging themes, understood and recognized as experiences that they have actually had or could picture themselves having had (van Manen, 1990). Further understanding and recognition took place with my thesis advisor during discussions of the data and themes, as well as during consultation with peers and colleagues and older family members on the findings of the research and their experiences of home and those of their elder family members. As the committee members encouraged further analysis, an anxiety provoking question surfaced, as documented in the research journal entry

May 14, 1998, "How will I know where "further" is with the analysis?" In answer to this question, the committee members encouraged me to read, re-read, highlight, listen to the tapes, look at the photographs, go for walks, contemplate, and through this, gain a sense, a feeling for the data. One member struck a chord in me by saying that it would be through this process that the data will tell me what to do, where to go. The chord that was struck was that of a memory from a love for Scottish Country Dancing and a much admired instructor who encouraged improvement by relaxing, listening, feeling, and finally, moving to the music, and with this, "the music would tell me what to do". I knew from the experience that it was true, the music told me what to do, the moves to make, and ultimately, the patterns to the dance. With the same technique, the data would tell me what to do. I returned with an open mind, listening, feeling, reading and re-reading; the patterns emerging with clarity.

CHAPTER IV

The Experience of Home

The research question sought to understand the experience of home to older rural people. Three elements emerged from the experiences described by the individuals: 1) sense of relatedness, 2) sense of purpose 3) sense of autonomy. The element of relatedness was enhanced by maintaining a connection to nature through observing animals and birds, watching the effects of changing seasons on the trees, and tending to the flowers and plants. Relatedness was also enhanced by maintaining a connection to people, by having space for hosting, using the kitchen as the centre of the home, having possessions, things and treasures that stimulated happy memories. The element of purpose was met by a combination of helping and participating and having work and responsibility. Maintaining independence, making choices, and having a sense of control over one's personal environment attained the element of autonomy.

Elements of Home

Relatedness

The individuals of the study reported a sense of connection, association, and alliance, of being linked to someone or something, as required in their experience of home in a meaningful way as required in their experience of home. Participants discussed maintaining their experience of home through the connection to people and the environment, through observing, possessing, talking and hosting.

Relatedness was the element resulting from the combination of the experiences as described by the participants: connection to nature, possessions, things and treasures, kitchen as centre, and hosting space. The various elements as described by the participants as the experience of home provided the avenue for the fostering of relationships and connections. The elements that combined to create the theme of relatedness were of a passive nature. They require the individual's involvement in observation, reminiscence, or availability, while the second and third set of elements that combined to result in the theme of purpose and autonomy were of a more active nature, involving self motivation, responsibility and initiative.

Maintaining a connection to nature and using the kitchen as centre were common to everyone interviewed. All of the older people held some type of connection to nature as significant in the experience of home. Nature and living things played a significant role in the lives of the people interviewed. They watched the moose grazing in the farm yard, the new born fawn in nearby shrubbery, tracked the changing seasons, grew garden produce and protected the spruce trees in front of the condominium from an over zealous pruner. Most people spoke of the importance of the kitchen in their home, and all of the participants chose the kitchen for their interview place. All other means to attaining relatedness, purpose and autonomy were common in at least five of the interviews.

To Nature.

A connection to nature was important to the participants. They felt that their experience of home was closely linked with the wild animals who wandered into their yard or gave birth near their home, and with the trees that were so beautiful holding the snow and frost in winter providing a home for the birds they watched in spring. As the participants spoke about their experiences of home and provided examples of their significant experiences, their wonder and excitement in the natural order of the seasons and nature's life emerged.

During their separate interviews, two participants spontaneously brought out recent photographs of the wonders they saw that continued to fill them with awe after more than 50 years on their farms. One was of the hoar frost on the trees that turned the yard into a wonderland of white, coating the trees and bushes early one winter morning. The second picture was of animals that had made the participant's yard their home for a period of time that year.

> "Last fall there was a moose and her baby right out here in the yard and she stayed around for two weeks...lots of deer here...we'll be sitting on a chair and I'll look out there...another deer."

Another participant had taken a picture of a new born fawn. It was nestled in the bushes not far from their house and as they showed me the picture they spoke reverently about the abundance of the wild life that surrounded their home providing food for the dinner table in years gone by.

> "We took a beaver out of the creek one day. It was 53 pounds. I also caught a fish in the (beaver) trap down there at the creek I cut it (fish) into steaks and give it to the neighbour down there for supper."

A woman in her 80's living in a village recounted her connection to nature and her vigilance over her flower bed and the joy of watching over it and nurturing it daily as it grew.

> "My flowers and watching them in the spring… trees and flowers, watching them grow…watch it in the early morning and go out at night

> and cover it from the frost…continuation of nature, full circle…birds, songs, buds, flowers …after you cut it (plant) down in the fall, in the spring you see that little bud coming up through the ground and growing into a beautiful flower of some sort. It's God's way of telling us that there is a continuation of nature from spring to fall and that we are going on from year to year, full circle, spring to fall…" (See plate 1)

One person cared for an old tree stump in the yard, and would decorate it each spring. She chose it as one of the photographs she wished me to take showing her significant experience of home.

> "I like the trees and have trees around …When we lived in the forest there was great big trees out there. There is nothing nicer than going into the big timbers and walk around. I think because of the few years that I had the big trees, the forests and the streams, water running down in the little springs and that, made me enjoy nature and enjoy my home a lot more…that stump, he's part of my life….We had to cut it down. I made sure they left part of it so I could use it as a flower base." (See plate 2)

From the interviews, it became apparent that for older people, their "feeling at home" was deeply and emotionally connected to the living things around them. Several others spoke of their need to have gardens, however small, to grow some food for their table or some flowers to give away to friends. One woman spoke of her growing of vegetables and flowers with great pride.

> "I like to poke around the plants...we can eat off the garden...I grow Gladiolas, I pass them around for whoever wants them."

One woman spoke of her early days on the farm and the work that became play as part of her experience of home,

> "I loved the farm, the animals. I could be as tired as tired and go out and play with calves, feed my chickens or something like that and just come in refreshed. It was a lot of work. But the farm was life. There was so much life around there. Always new life."

This woman, well into her 80's, now lives in a small town, alone in her rented house that she tells me feels like home, where she tends her patch of a vegetable garden and cares for her cats (See plate 3).

One couple who had moved within the past year to their condominium continued their connection to nature by way of the trees around their new home. As they told the story of finding a place they felt they could live and enjoy they described what they found.

> "I talked to my daughter in law and I said, you know I think we maybe found the place we want to live. We liked the idea of the trees across the end, They just put these trees in the fall. They are over thirty feet tall, amazing job they did."

My comment about the "forest" that seemed to hang over their balcony, brought this comment.

> "No, I'm glad I was here (this morning) to catch this guy (tree pruner) because he was really going after that tree out there. We told him to leave it alone, we like it hanging over there. We'll trim it back if it needs it."

Kitchen as centre.

All interviews took place in the kitchen as suggested by the participants. One couple's kitchen was a working area with high stools that sat up to a breakfast counter. This couple considered the dining room table, the kitchen nook or their living room for the interview and chose in the end to sit at the kitchen nook. These choices intrigued me and I was cautious following the first interview when the participant chose the kitchen, not to influence the locations of subsequent interviews. I felt there may be some significance in the chosen location for the interview as it related to the experience of home for these people. The kitchen emerged as having possible significance following the third interview in which the kitchen was the chosen site and the kitchen was indicated by the participant during the interview as having a significance in the individual's experience of home.

One participant was firm in her attachment to her kitchen and expressed this at length. She thought out loud about other rooms in a home that could be more important but returned to her original statement after much thought, to declare that the kitchen was the most important room in her home. To her, the kitchen was the centre of her home, symbolizing home itself.

> "…my husband made the cupboards (See plate 4) …where I spent my time, kitchen was for talking about problems, it's where the family gathered…if they want to talk something over they usually come out to the kitchen…you could always talk about it (problems) around the kitchen table…it's the centre of the home." (See plate 5) Another person told me "…the kitchen…that's were everybody centres."

Coincidentally my own personal experience of kitchen as the place where family talking happens was reinforced during a visit with my mother. She felt her body failing, and after spending almost two weeks with me and having many opportunities to talk about her feelings in various settings, she began to share with me one evening as we sat at the kitchen table. She shared her readiness for dying and her fear of the unknown - what dying from her condition might feel like. To me, this kind of talking could only happen in the kitchen, where it felt cozy and safe. It brought back many memories of times spent with family and friends in closeness and love and sometimes sadness at the kitchen table. Somehow, a safety and comfort existed in this place.

One woman was energetic in her description of the kitchen and the memories it held as an experience of home. It is interesting to note that the home where she recently lived was not the home where she fed her family nor was she able to prepare full meals for her family and guests. Her kitchen continued to provide her with a feeling of being at home.

> "It's where you had the pleasure of cooking for your family and feeding all these hungry mouths. It's a thrill to prepare good meals and see everybody enjoying it. I love my kitchen".

Another told me;

> "If you love cooking I think you'll find the kitchen interesting. I love baking. I'm used to having, doing a lot of baking."

Possessions, Things and Treasures.

The means to attaining the experience of home was described as having certain possessions, things, and treasures either as collections or as individual items in close proximity. Relatedness was enhanced through certain special possessions as described by the older people. They described the important role their items played in maintaining a relationship to family members through associated memories and the happy events of their past, thus maintaining the relatedness required in their experience of home.

> "That's only a small portion of trinkets and things we've been given by our children over the years."

This was heard from a participant who had lived in one home for over 25 years and had recently moved from his rural town due to his wife's and his own poor health to a smaller new home in a nearby rural town. In response to my question "Does this new place feel like home yet?" he answered slowly in a soft tone,

> "Oh, well, we have everything around us to make it look like home. The pictures of all the kids and as much stuff as we could salvage. There are boxes downstairs that we haven't even got into yet."

He lamented the number of their "things" that were in boxes in their basement because there was no room to display them but also pointed out the numerous pictures and trinkets that adorned their living space representing the items that remain boxed in their basement. At the time this man did not feel that he was experiencing home but declared that the time would come, as he made physical changes that reflected his meaning of home.

Another man surrounded by his possessions and collection of antique items commented:

> "…it's got good memories…I got a lot of stuff around the farm and over there and out in the shed…that thundermug there, my grandfather's pipe

> bowl, my mustache cup up there…and that glass, that little jar, ...that little jar up there, the label on that... 'Choice Jams and Jellies' that's '(family name) Choice Jams and Jellies'. My grandfather had the store in Toronto."

As one woman pointed out her "stuff" that followed her and her husband fifteen years ago when they moved from their farm home of thirty-two years into town, she told me:

> "You want to be able to wander around a little bit, around your house and you want room for your possessions and if you are in one of those homes (nursing homes), you have to cut down…we had all the same possessions (following the move)…we didn't change much stuff".

A widow who had moved the furthest from her previous home answered my question about how she had made her new house feel like home.

> " (I brought) my personal things, brought my bedroom suite and an antique buffet…dishes and things that hold memories for me."

For this woman, having her belongings that held memories for her in place, was the beginning of creating a feeling of "hominess", which included her relatedness to past memories.

A woman who equated her "treasures" with her life and all of her memories was stirring in her analysis of the importance of her things in making her space "home".

> "The treasures, it's also the life that you led…all your memories of your lifetime is in this house…to me it is a place of comfort…things that my husband made is part of us as a family…children grew up in their

> bedrooms, and things that they had are still there…some of them are gone, they've taken them with them, but…you can open the door and feel them to a certain extent."

Only one couple who had recently moved to a new home lamented the lost possessions or things with no room to display. Three of the participants appeared to see this time of moving as a time of transition; a time when reducing their possessions made good sense as they moved to smaller homes. One couple moved by choice due to health concerns, without pressure from others. One couple and one individual moved due to pressure from children to be closer because of the participants' poor physical health. One of those pressured moved from a neighbouring province and another from a neighbouring town. All felt that this was a necessary transition in their life and although difficult to part with possessions which had connection to the past, two were able to do so, with the third, a couple, having more difficulty, thus retaining their possessions, although their living space was limited. The couple who moved without pressure from others spoke of the difficulty but also of the success of parting with many of their possessions.

> "We had our boats, our sailboat and our canoe and our little fishing boat with a 15 hp motor on it. It (moving) was a difficult decision to make. We had so much to part with. We gave away things to everybody; our children especially. We gave to the church, to the (thrift store) place; dining room suite, chesterfields, snow blowers, books, extra clothing. We didn't have room to keep it here. It really helps to give stuff to people. We know we aren't both going to be here forever and it's going

> to be a lot easier for the one that's left behind to have all that stuff done."

This couple had kept significant treasures including artwork and mementos that held particular meaning for them and that fit into their reduced space. They felt that these mementos provided the important connection to memories of earlier times and people.

The woman who relocated the furthest distance to a very small house was touching in her description of the dissemination of most of her possessions. Her method of dispossessing herself of some of her things was her way of maintaining her connection to people through leaving some of her personally produced items with them.

> "I gave some (things) away. Jams and jellies and that, I knew I had overdone. I had good friends to give them to. And my fruitcakes too. I gave most of them away to the people that had been special to me. This one woman in particular, she was hard up and she was so happy. I gave them some of my furniture. For me it was more meaningful to give it to someone."

This poignant story of giving away of one's things and collections of preserves to special and needy people is significant in its similarity to the disbursement discussed by the couple previously mentioned.

For a woman who remained in her original marriage home, her spoon collection and the board her husband built to display it held a place of importance within her home. She felt that this collection was significantly tied to her feeling of home and placed strong emphasis on its survival in a serious fire that had destroyed their last house. The replacement home in which she now lived was built on the land that she and her husband shared for more than 50 years. When I asked her to finish the sentence "When I look at (blank), that represents my home..." she completed with:

> "The spoon board, collection, that corner (where it hangs) is mine, nobody dares move that. The spoon board was in the fire and it was just exactly like that when I took it out after the fire was put out. A piece of the ceiling fell out and fell on it and protected it. I guess it was supposed to be." (See plate 6)

This woman had not traveled to all of the places where her spoons originated but had been assisted in her collection by friends and family who had traveled as well. This collection represented to her the connection to her friends and family and their stories of travel, along with her own experiences of travel with her husband over the years. She also pointed out to me her husband's bell collection that was as numerous and intriguing as her spoons. They had their own place in a showcase he had built. Both collections were displayed, as trophies would be for great achievements.

All but one participant referred to their chair when talking about the feeling of home. I asked one woman who had lived in her home for over 50 years, to tell me about her experience of home and hominess. She told me:

> "My old rocking chair. It's just one we've had from the time when the children were little, and we rocked them to sleep. To me, it's my comfort. That's where I go when I need comfort, to my chair. It's close to where my husband use to always sit in the other chair beside it. (See plate 7) There is still that kind of bridge…you feel you could turn around

> and say something and sometimes you do. Don't get a good answer though!"

Interesting that a piece of furniture could conjure up such powerful connections to the past, particularly to a spouse, deceased for some twenty years.

Another told me, when asked where in her home she feels most at home,

> "…this chair where I can put my feet up. It's a settled in feeling…there to stay…comfortable and relaxed." (See plate 8)

She elaborated afterwards to include her husband and the close proximity of their sitting places within the home as providing her with comfort.

> "…in the evening we turn that light on and both our chairs are there and we can both see the TV and both read in the two chairs side by side, comfortable. I think you are physically comfortable in your own chair and you have your feet up and mentally because your husband is right beside you and everything is really comfortable."

A couple, when asked if they had a place in their home that provided a feeling of 'being at home', indicated their two chairs, side by side in a small den just large enough for the chairs, bookcase and television. (See plate 9)

> "The den and those two chairs…we spend a lot of time there now. We sit down and have a little rest after lunch which is a good idea."

For this couple, their chairs represented a place where they felt safe to doze in the middle of the day and provided the comfort of proximity. They were establishing rituals in their new home, and the chairs provided a link between the memories of a previous home and the new one. Even the participant, who did not refer to her chair as important in her meaning of home, indicated her living room with her in her chair holding her cats, as a place to photograph at the end of the interview. (See plate 4)

Hosting Space.

The means to attaining the experience of home was described as one of providing the room for participants to encourage connection with others, either for social visits for a few hours or overnight visits from family and friends. The idea of being able to welcome people into the home, and the joy that these people felt from these connections was a strong component of experiencing home.

"When I think of space my thoughts turn to physical space, space to move without being crowded or crowding others, space that feels a comfortable distance from another person" (journal entry, May 2/98). As the participants in this study spoke of their experiences of feeling at home, all of them spoke of the amount of space they had in their home and the adequacy of the space for their personal needs. Only one of the participants, who had recently moved to a smaller space, felt that he did not have as much space as he would like. But, he hastened to tell me that it was the amount of space he and his wife needed. More would be too difficult for his wife to care for, given her poor health. He went on to tell me that once he had built the rooms in the basement for his children and grandchildren to visit overnight, the house would feel more like home.

> "Well, when we used to go downstairs, it didn't look very homey. All you could see was insulation and 2x4's all around the outside walls, no bathroom. No place for my kids to sleep when they come...we decided that we'd fix up the basement so the kids have a place to come to...when the kids come home that really makes it into a home. They'll make it

> into a home, go get stuff out of the cupboards and help cook things up. It's not as roomy (as last home). I suppose we have to get used to that. Other than that I think it's going to be all right."

A woman who lived in the quaint home where she and her husband raised their family told me how thankful she was to have the space for her family to be with her.

> "And being in my own home, I enjoy my grandchildren. and great-grandchildren now. They can come and stay with me overnight. They can run around if they want to out in the yard. They can enjoy themselves. In smaller places and homes (care homes, lodges) you can't do those things. You can't have anybody stay with you. Young people aren't able to go and stay. They can go for an hour or two and visit but there isn't the pleasure or the joy that you get out of them when they are jumping and having fun and hollering."

Space did not always mean a lot of room, more so a place where people could gather. This was clearly stated by a man who was born on the property where he lived. When I asked him if he had a place he had been that felt most like home than any other, he motioned out the window of his present home to a small house approximately 200 metres across the yard.

> "That little house up there (pointing out the window). We had 3 rooms and 3 kids in it....no running water just a little outhouse and I'd move back there today. We had a lot of good times there. That's when we were still visiting with our friends. I still feel something every time I walk in that house. I feel like 'coming home'. It's still home. Her (wife's) dad

> and sister came out pretty near every weekend and we had a neighbour who had eight kids and often they would come over and visit over there with us." (See plate 10)

The "space" referred to by the participants was not always indoors, but included the surrounding area as well. A participant described the corner of their yard where a fire pit and a picnic table sat, where his grown family would bring their children to visit, for food, guitar playing and singing. This man enthusiastically explained to me;

> "Our yard, we have a fire pit down there and the kids will always come up. We light a fire. My son and son-in-law are real guitar players and they'll put on a musical show for us, but most of the time it's a time for eating hot dogs." (See plate 11)

One woman described her love of having people around and how friends and family visits made her house a home.

> "It's the idea of family and friends. We have a lot of people in. We had two couples yesterday. I just like people to be here. We couldn't have kids come there at those places (lodge, nursing home)...there's eleven of us when we have dinner. I'd rather they come here, (versus going to their home). I just like the people to be here. Home is important to me."

This person spoke of home as synonymous with hosting people and receiving guests as did many of the others. Having the space to entertain their guests and family in their home was an important part of defining "home".

Purpose

Maintaining a sense of purpose included being involved in activities that involved caring and helping, and participating in reciprocal relationships that people reported as being in a "give and take" relationship, where one was able to share abilities of value. Work to do and projects for which the participants felt responsible and competent was an experience of home expressed by the participants.

Helping and Participating.

Participation involved the care of other people and the environment, which often involved cooking and baking for others, caring for the environment or of relationships with others, participation in the "give and take" of daily living.

One participant described her love of her kitchen, baking and cooking good meals for herself and others. She felt she was able to nurture herself with proper meals and added that she was able to return something to those who were busy and yet kind to her. She felt good about providing them with her baking. She likened her enjoyment of baking to a creative art as she continued to search out recipes that were new and challenging and then proceeded to alter them experimentally. The interesting point here is that this lady had moved twice from where she raised her family and lived alone in her present home. She was unable to entertain full meal preparation for others although she did prepare muffins and desserts to pass on to friends and family. She spoke with pride about doing this well and the importance to her of visiting lonely people and creating tasty dishes to help others who missed home baking or who were too busy to be creative in the kitchen.

> "I visit a few ladies at the Manor sometimes. I was up to visit them again this morning. I felt sorry for them because the way they express themselves, it is always the same thing (talking about the boring food). There is a lovely bunch of ladies run the thrift shop and I drop in there once or twice a week. I go and take some muffins or something for their coffee break."

One woman expressed pride in her ability to cook and emphasized throughout the interview her accomplishments in the kitchen that were helpful to others and were her expression of gratitude.

> "But I do get a lot of enjoyment out of cooking, creating. It's a feeling of creating something and you don't just make the same (food) all the time…changing the recipe around. I'll bake something and see to it that I get it sent up to (daughter). I save a little for myself. It makes you feel good to have done something for her. They are so good to me and it's one thing I can do. They often have me for Sunday night supper and I just love it when I can bring dessert."

Caring for the environment is another element of home the participants described as indicated in this woman's description of giving back and lack of waste.

> "My son built that compost deal for me, and different ones have said I don't need that. I said for years I've saved all my wet garbage (for the compost). None of that goes out, and I feel like I'm doing my little part because it goes back into the garden and I'm not throwing it out. I have a little container and take it out to the compost. And my papers are saved and everything."

This woman spoke with such vigor about her diligence in recycling that she exuded energy as she described her interest in recycling and "doing her part".

Another woman spoke of the importance to her of taking her home made food items to gatherings of women in her community. These women believed they were doing her a favour by releasing her from the task due to her longevity of membership. She felt that without this fulfillment of her responsibility she would feel left out and on the "taking" end of what used to be a "give and take" relationship between her and the other women. She retained her right to be involved to the best of her abilities on any given day declaring;

> "It's a point of participating. If I can't contribute something then I no longer belong, and if I no longer belong, why am I living?"

Work and Responsibility.

The experience of home was described as having work to do in and around the home, hobbies, abilities that enhanced the home, and pride in accomplishments connected to the home. As I heard the words of several of the participants I began to recognize their energy when they spoke of their experiences of home that included their activities of purposeful work and responsibility.

Potted plants were cared for as carefully as large flower and vegetable gardens that demanded preparation early in the growing season and daily attendance during the remainder of the season. The connection with nature in this process is one that is more active than the process that attained relatedness for the participants. The connection with nature as it related to purpose was active in the sense of the gardening or plant tending as a responsibility taken on by the older person, one that demanded daily attendance, competence and a certain level of "work".

A participant who took great pride in the home where he fulfilled what he calls his life's work, that of raising his family, described his experience of home as his family and the work he and his wife have put into their home.

> "My symbol of home is my whole family. That's my life's work… (points to a picture of his family on the kitchen wall) (plate 12).

A participant who had recently moved from a home of 30 years to a new and smaller home told me in response to my asking how he thought he would make his new place feel more like home;

> "I do my hobby work, saw any boards or make any handicraft…I'm fixing up the basement so when the kids come they have a place to come to. No place for my kids to sleep when they come. Two bedrooms wouldn't be enough when the kids come so we decided that we'd fix up the basement so the kids have a place to come to. I'm suppose to be a handyman, carpenter and painter so I'm doing it myself."
>
> "I'll get the yard going. You have your own and get to do it yourself (versus if you live in shared housing). You don't get to take part in looking after them (in shared housing). They are looked after by a caretaker and you just get to admire them, but that's not the same as working with them yourself."

When I asked him how he would know when this new place had arrived at a state of "hominess" he said as a summary,

> "...we're working on it (making it homey)...put in a garden, get it fixed up...get the yard going, trees and flowers like we had before, get the room for the kids to stay."

This man's health was poor and some days he found he was able to work for less than an hour. Some times he needed help from a neighbour, but his sense of accomplishment and competence were visible as he told of his creative efforts in "getting the yard going" and making room for his family to come to. Although he was able to pay others for doing this work, he viewed it as his responsibility given his expertise. His sense of purpose in creating the home was an element of his experience of home.

One man who had farmed all of his life reflected on the irony of retiring from farming.

> "I guess since I quit farming I did a lot of gardening. That's getting harder every year. More gardening now than when the kids were home, work to do, vegetables, potatoes, anything you need. We have a hard time giving our kids anything. They say we aren't supposed to be doing any of that."

From this comment, this man is not gardening out of need for food for his survival but fulfilling some other need, perhaps his connection to his life's work, to growing things and to the land and a feeling of work to be done. This man spoke of the garden as work, "the jobs" he and his wife have.

> "She's got a little flower garden, well a big flower garden for her now, but that's her job. She won't let me in there. Well she helps in the vegetables, last year she helped me."

Autonomy

Autonomy for these participants was the maintaining of independence in daily living, and the sense that the individual had freedom of choice in their every day situations. Autonomy was attained by the participants' sense of independence, choice and control.

Participants felt that home was a place where they could be independent. This meant having choices, options and freedom to plan any particular day in whichever manner they wished. Independence was described as having the choices of what and when they ate, along with the ability to close a door to the outside world with a feeling of safety and security from intruders. Independence was also described as knowing that their place was their own, to create, decorate and in which to take pride. This did not mean that they financially needed to own their home but through the actions they experienced, they made the home their own, whether it was rented, leased or actually through ownership.

> "It's ours, we can do what we like with it".

I was assured that this did not have to do with ownership but could also be felt with being a renter as well, due to a perception that the space for that period of time is one's own and activity within the space is one's personal business.

One woman described how she had experienced a feeling of home many years previously when she and her young husband moved to their first home and compared the time to her most recent move and what she was doing presently to feel at home.

> "Home means an awful lot to us, and to me, I just have to, well the first funny old place we had in the upstairs in a house in (name), I didn't have a sewing machine or anything, and I went out and got some material and made slip covers by hand. I just had to try to make things look nice...just coziness or something."

Her husband went on to recount how 55 years later she had again created hominess in their new condominium.

> "...just coziness...her ability to get nice furniture, placed nicely...the whole atmosphere, flowers at times...we come in the door and we are so happy to be back here. It's the way we wanted it and we made it. It's your atmosphere. It's your place, nesting place. It's what you've done to it...the way you selected it...the way you furnished it, fixed it up, painted it, decorated it because it's your individual planning. We come in the door and we are so happy to be back here. It's your place, nesting place."

These people were not telling me they had physically been able to perform all of these tasks as they had done in earlier years in other homes. Due to their age and health they had selected their home and organized others for the heavier work, to create a place that was a reflection of them and their tastes and remained responsible for its upkeep.

The women who were interviewed continued to prepare meals and enjoyed some form of baking. What they emphasized was that they were able to do this when they felt well enough and could take rests when they needed. They could plan their steps according to their ability and how they felt on any given day. Another corroborated this statement.

> "I like to bake and we always have good square meals. We eat well, even if the prices are getting kind of crazy on some stuff. We eat what we want."
>
> "I have my independence...doing what you want to do or how you want to do it...I enjoy getting what type of food you want, cooking."

One woman felt that her home was a place where she could decide when she wanted her privacy as she explains in the following quote.

> "I love company and I enjoy being out, but I also like that quiet time that I can be quiet and sit down and reminisce or whatever, read. One of the reasons I think why the house or the home means so much to me is that I still have my independence and I feel that to be independent as you grow older is one of the most important things. You can shut the door and relax, think, meditate...to me that's home, where you can be quiet. You can shut the door and no one else is supposed to be walking in on you".
>
> (plate 13)

A woman who spent eighteen years as a young, live-in housekeeper-nanny described her feeling of being at home in each place she lived. Even though she was an employee of the home, her independence within the home was an element of her experience of home. She went on to say that this feeling carried on in each of the homes she worked during that time period and then into her marriage and setting up of a home to raise her own family. She felt that because she continued to feel independent in her recently settled small home, she continued to experience the feeling of being at home. Following is her comment on her working years in other people's homes. For her, decision-making was independence.

> "Oh, I always felt at home. They… all the decisions were left up to me. I ran the places. I did all the buying and cooking and everything. I was my own boss. I did all the running of the place."

One woman viewed her experience of home as the independence to tend her garden to the best of her ability and maintaining her level of activity.

> "You can't just sit down and vegetate. Like I told (daughter), she said 'Mom, you were in the garden!' and I said yes, and it was fun. I said ten or fifteen minutes leaning on the hoe isn't going to hurt me."

The attainment of relatedness, purpose and autonomy were enhanced by the various means reported in the stories of the older people. As described in the analysis of the study results, all of these elements emerged equally as important to the older people, with all three elements required by these participants in order to experience home.

Plate 1

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plate 4

Plate 5

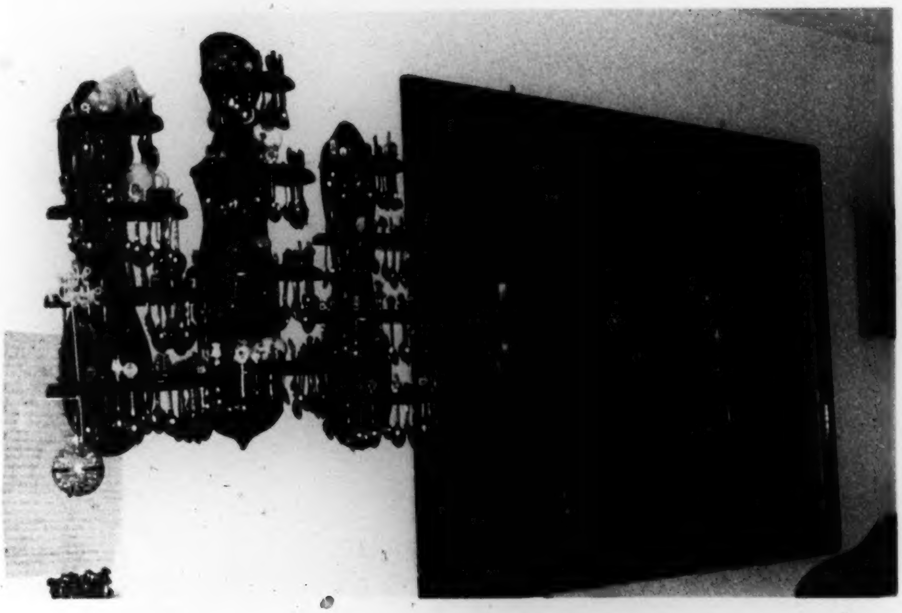

Plate 6

Plate 7

Plate 8

Plate 9

Plate 10

Plate 11

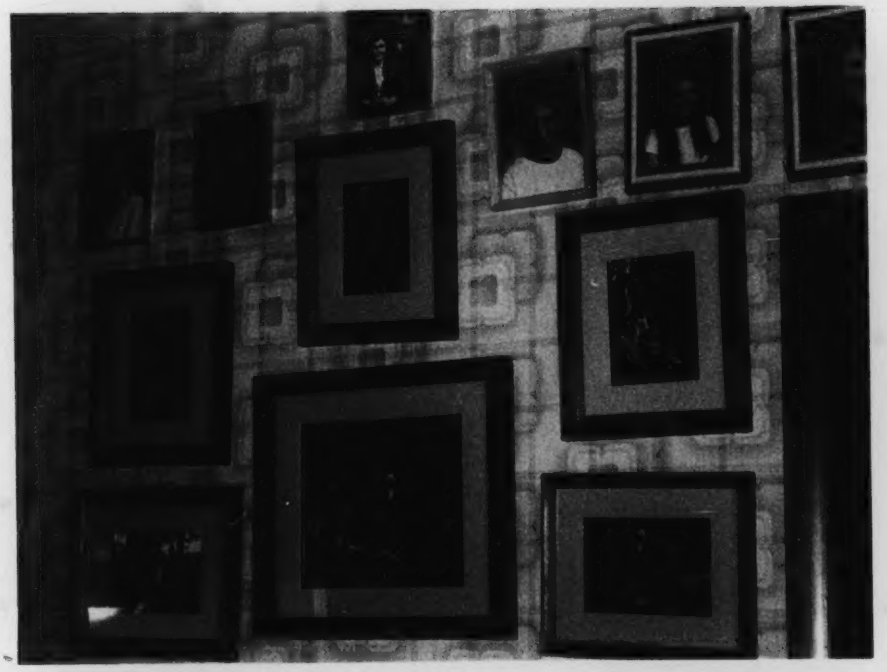

Plate 12

Plate 13

CHAPTER V

Discussion

In order to reflect on the elements of home and the accompanying question of what had been learned, I returned to the existing literature to compare and integrate the findings. The discussion begins with an examination of the findings of the study, and their relationship to the research literature as well to other types of literature, as is appropriate in a phenomenological study. The discussion will conclude with the implications of the findings for older people, their families, and the planners of care for older people; and directions for future research.

The Concept of Home

This study of home found the meaning of home consisting of three elements integral to the experience of home for the participants of the study. Home, when described by the older rural people, is comprised of having (a) relatedness to nature and people (b) a purpose and (c) autonomy. The analysis of the stories of the older people and the older people themselves clarified that all three elements were essential to the experience of home.

In Chapter II, the review of relevant literature from a variety of disciplines on the concept of home revealed the opinions of the researchers on the complex nature of the study of home. The four elements that were common in the literature were those of belongingness, being surrounded by significant things, having relationships, and having personal control. A closer examination of the relationship between the findings of the study and relevant literature will illuminate the supportive nature of the literature, the contributions of the present study, and the directions for future research.

Home as Relatedness

Throughout the literature, home is a place where people are able to be in relationship, primarily with other people, through use of the physical environment and through supportive networks. The older rural people of this study reported relatedness as an element of home that was enhanced through (a) connection to nature and others (b) kitchen as the centre (c) significant things and possessions and (d) hosting space.

The participants reflected on their connection to nature that included observation of the changing seasons, the growing of gardens, the feeding of birds and deer, and the proximity to nature. Their stories indicated a symbiotic relationship with nature that was maintained through ongoing observation of, and participation with, the land, plants and animals that were an integral part of each individual's life history. Their history included lives supported at many levels by their natural surroundings and in return for that support, a respect and appreciation for the natural surroundings that included ongoing care and nurturing of nature.

Most of the participants of the present study, after a lifetime of living in rural areas, continued to demonstrate a reverence and amazement for the wonders of the natural world that surrounded them. For example, they spoke of the trees that were near them or the trees that they cared for and watched through the changing seasons. The connection to nature, to the cycles of the year and to living things may have provided comfort for the older rural person who has lived close to nature. These people, who have worked on the land, lived near nature, observed the growth in surrounding fields, the lives of animals, and the splendor of trees, described a nature as a connection to their spiritual self. One woman used the spiritual connection in describing the "circle of life, spring to fall, God's way of telling us there's continuation" (p. 75) when describing the growth and life of flowers and trees she cared for in her yard.

As the rural older people spoke of their connection to nature, they supported the work of Kivett, (1986) and Norris-Baker and Scheidt (1994) in their examinations of aging in a rural place. They referred to the physical context as distinctive for rural people with the participants of the studies experiencing home through relatedness to the land and as "having roots".

In literary works of rural life, there are many references to nature and especially to the significance of trees such as those references to trees that many of the participants of this study made. Bouchard (1994), in his book of poems "If you're not from the prairie..." reflects his feeling about the trees as part of nature similarly to the feelings expressed by the individuals of this study. His poetry describes the significance of his home, with descriptions that further illuminate the feelings of relatedness to nature and especially to trees, as did many of the participants of this study.

> "If you're not from the prairie,
> You don't know our trees,
> You *can't* know our trees.
>
> The trees that we know have taken so long,
> To live through our seasons, to grow tall and strong.
>
> They're loved and they're treasured, we watched as they grew,
> We know they were special - the prairie has few.
>
> If you're not from the prairie,
> You *don't* know our trees." (p. 18)

The nature of people's relationship to the land is not detailed in the research literature. A gap exists therefore, in understanding the particular relationship to nature that has been experienced by participants. The connection to nature as an experience of home was reported in this present study both as a passive watchfulness in observing changing seasons and as active caring and nurturing. These findings indicate an addition to the field of the study of home in the area of rural older people that broadens and more distinctly details the perspective of their connection to nature. This broadened perspective includes the "working" connection to nature through growing things, and the nurturing and caring connection to nature through watchfulness of wildlife in a protective manner.

Relatedness to others is well documented throughout the literature as an element of home. In addition to their relatedness to nature, the older people of this study also reflected on their relatedness to other people as enhancing their experience of home. They attained relatedness to others through having their kitchen as the centre for talking and gathering, through the memories of others that were attached to their significant possessions and through using their hosting space to gather friends ands family for extended visits.

The older people reflected on the kitchen as the centre of the home, the place where talking took place, where serious discussions happened and problems were solved with family members. For the individuals of this study, the experience of home was closely tied to having this particular space that invited relatedness to occur. Of note also was the fact that all interviews for this study took place in the kitchen or in one case at the breakfast counter, at the direction of the participants. The place for sharing and reflection was demonstrated through the use of the kitchen for that purpose although other spaces of the home were available. The use of the kitchen as enhancing relatedness is not well documented in the research literature. Howell (1983b) is one who referred to people's experience of home as having space to gather for coffee and talking. She also referred to home as having surroundings that allowed for family meals around a common table, facilitating the establishment of family rituals such as gatherings that had the potential to enhance relationships. Howell's participants alluded to the relationship factor of the kitchen in their experience of home but the people of the present study resolutely viewed their kitchen as the centre of the home for enhancing relatedness. Although Howell's (1983b) study touched briefly on places for gathering and relatedness, no clear designation of the kitchen was found. The literature reviewed for this study did not provide documentation of the importance of the kitchen in enhancing relatedness, thus the reflections of the participants of the present study provide an addition to the existing literature on the experience of home. Their reflections add to the research literature and raise further questions as to the kitchen enhancing relatedness as possibly a particularly rural experience of home.

The role of significant things and possessions in people's lives is an area that has been reported in the research literature. When the older people of this study reflected on their experience of home as relatedness they not only spoke of nature and the kitchen as enhancing relatedness, they also reflected on their significant things and possessions as enhancing relatedness. They saw these varied possessions as helping them to feel connected, related to others of their past and others who were no longer present in their daily lives. The reflections of the participants supported the findings of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochbert-Halton (1981), Belk (1991a), Marcus (1992) and Zingmark et al. (1995) who found that significant possessions stimulated memories of meaningful events of the past and connected individuals to significant people in their lives.

When the people of this study spoke of the significance of their possessions, they not only presented the items as connections to others but they also spoke of the items in relation to each other within a context of the home itself. Although they reflected on their significant possessions such as antiques handed down through the family and the favourite chair that provided a place for safety and relaxation, they were often spoken of in context. The family antiques were part of the farm where the individual had lived all of his life, therefore his significant possessions of the farm-related antiques were felt to be significant because they were in the context of the farm. The individuals who reflected on their favourite chair as their experience of home clarified the importance of the relationship of their chair to that of their spouse's chair nearby. The chair was not discussed as a singular item but as a place that stimulated a relatedness to their significant other.

It appeared, from the reflections of the participants, that relatedness was enhanced by the presence of the significant possession in the context of significant settings or possessions. For the woman of the present study who continued her relatedness to her deceased husband for twenty years especially when sitting in her chair near to his chair, the two possessions were significantly connected. For the woman who maintained a relatedness to her adult children through the memories stimulated by their childhood bedrooms and the few things they had left behind, the context of the possessions was particularly important.

The significance of this 'possessions in context' learning is an important finding when older people are considering a move to a new setting. For some, the context of the family home was felt to be required for their significant possessions to enhance the relatedness that was their experience of home. It may be that for some older people the experience of home through using significant possessions as enhancement is not transferable to new settings.

Researchers from a variety of disciplines examining the experience of home related the importance of environmental space for significant activities that connect people to their family and friends (Howell, 1983a; Dovey, 1985; Zingmark et al., 1995). Findings from these studies on home and the use of environmental space are similar to the findings of this study that older rural people value their ability to host others in their home. The use of hosting space was the third enhancement of relatedness to others that the older rural people reflected on during the interviews. They spoke of the importance of space within their home that provided an ability to host others and to connect with family members in a meaningful way, this usually being room for overnight stays by those who lived further away.

The older rural people of this study spoke of their adult children and other family members who no longer lived in close proximity to their towns and villages. They discussed the importance to their experience of home of being able to continue their relatedness to those family members through having them visit for, at least, overnight. They felt strongly about the ability to offer a room for sleeping, and space for gathering, suggesting that the ability to host others enhanced not only relatedness as an experience of home, but possibly also as a means of participation in reciprocal relationships with others. Participation and reciprocal relationships is discussed further in the discussions of the element of purpose, but is significant enough to consider also as part of the hosting that the older rural people reflected on in their discussion on home. It is a valuable learning that for these older rural people, many of their family members lived at least several hours drive away as often happens in rural communities when the children become adults and seek out work in larger communities.

Relatedness as an element of home has emerged from this study as one of the three integral elements for the experience of home. The older rural people who participated added new insights to the existing literature reviewed for this study. They described connection to nature, having a kitchen that promoted relatedness, significant possessions considered within their context, and hosting space. These new learnings assist with an understanding of the experience of home for older rural people and provide new areas to explore in working with older rural people who are relocating home.

Home as Purpose

Purpose as an experience of home was described by the rural older people of this study as enhanced through acts of giving and helping others, and having work and responsibilities. These two aspects of purposeful action at times were linked to relatedness with others in the discussions with the older people but the main focus for them was that these actions more importantly provided them with purpose in their daily lives.

The review of literature on the experience of home revealed that researchers found that the experience of home included the act of helping, which enhanced relationships with others (Everitt, 1988; Aller & Coeling, 1995). Findings that relationship was enhanced through helping others was not supported in this present study as both men and women reported helping their rural neighbours as providing a sense of purpose. They had been helping all of their lives and saw the action as one of purpose as well as a responsibility that went with a more isolated existence.

Continued giving to others in their older age helped them to sustain their experience of home through the purpose that the helping activities provided. Some reported the giving of flowers and vegetables from their garden and others spoke of continuing to help with providing a few sandwiches to social gatherings. They reported their experiences as providing purposeful and often times reciprocal participation with others, thus enhancing their experience of home. From the discussions of the older people emerged life patterns that involved helping and giving to others, with these life patterns being continued into older age, although usually tempered by the restraints in physical ability most of the people experienced. They reflected on their giving and helping when reflecting on their work in past years and maintained a sense of responsibility for helping that was ingrained in their rural communities.

The theme throughout the older people's reflections was one of primarily purposeful activity rather than an activity to enhance relatedness. This new learning as a result of this study may be a reflection of the rural values of purposeful and valuable activity as a way of life, where people of their generation relied on each other for survival in difficult times. Since their earlier experiences of home included helping others, there is no reason to believe they would relinquish it as an activity that provided purpose in their later life.

Closely related to the activity of helping others was having work and responsibilities as enhancements of purpose reported by the people of this study. People reflected on their life patterns of work and responsibilities that supported their families and enhanced their homes. A person who was a carpenter and a handyman in his younger years believed that he would continue to be so even into his later years, albeit with a slower and more limited capacity. Those who reflected on the work of maintaining their surroundings, creating space for adult children to stay for visits and caring for plants and gardens, saw these activities as work and responsibilities that enhanced their sense of purpose. They asserted that without purpose in their day they would not feel they could experience home. Their reflections supported Kivett's (1986) findings that home is experienced through productive use of time. For people to feel that they are using time productively, Kivett found that an activity that resulted in measurable accomplishments was required, most often found in gardening and housework activity by the older rural person. The value system of the people Kivett studied was reported as one that involved the continuation of daily activities that involved serious productive work, but yet due to the retirement status of the individuals, was seen as no longer required work in a vocational sense.

More specifically, the people of this present study compared similarly to Kivett's (1986) study in their reflections on work and responsibilities as enhancing their sense of purpose when they were tending and nurturing a garden that grew vegetables. The finding by Kivett that people pursued work although it was no longer required in a vocational sense was reflected on by the people in this study who claimed continued work and responsibility for their vegetable gardens although they produced much more food than they could use. Others of this study reported caring for larger flower gardens than in the past and others spoke of being busy with their responsibility as group members of organizations. They reflected on the purpose that their accomplishments provided and the experience of home that resulted. Similar findings were reported by Rendon et al. (1995) and Damsma et al (1998) who found that people claimed that work and responsibility as simple as sweeping the floor and light care of their living space, answering the door in the adult family home and watering the plants, enhanced their sense of purpose in life. This valuing of work and responsibility to enhance a sense of purpose was summarized by an older person in this present study. When reflecting on her experience of home she described her responsibility of recycling and composting that she felt brought purpose to her day, stating that she was participating in environmental projects and "doing her part".

The people of this study talked of helping others, along with work and responsibilities as enhancements to purposeful activity that constituted one of the three integral elements of their experience of home. Although the finding of purposeful activity as an elements of home is reported extensively in the literature as an element of home, the helping of others to attain purpose was unique. The older people were not primarily seeking relationships when helping but were more intent on finding purpose in the activity. There needs to be caution when assisting people to recreate their experience of home not to assume they require a reciprocal relationship in the helping activity but an awareness that it may be the purposeful activity that draws them.

Home as Autonomy

Autonomy as an element of home is used in the simplest form, with independence, choice and control as the foundation. Autonomy is self rule, self determination, regulating one's own behaviour and experience and governing the initiation and direction of action (Ryan & Powelson, 1991). The element of personal control as reported in the literature aligns clearly with the element of autonomy as identified from this study. It may be that the area of independence, choice, control and autonomy has been investigated more often than other elements of home.

Independence, choice and control were identified by the older people of this study as being aspects of their autonomy. They described needing to be able to choose what they would eat for meals and when they would eat them, choose when they would rest and when they wanted privacy. They had the independence to make the choice to take control of their living space to deny others entry. Many of the participants reflected on the independence and choice to directly impact their environment. Independence included such acts as redecorating a room and personalizing their surroundings. Individuals emphasized that independence meant that, although they may not be capable physically to create and care for their surroundings, they initiated the acts through direction to others.

The older people used words such as choice, independence and control when discussing their meal planning. They reflected on the importance of their ability to choose their meals and times they would be eaten when discussing their experience of home. The simple choices they made regarding their daily activities and their timing was an important enhancement of the autonomy that they identified as an element of home. These findings supported those of Zingmark et al. (1995) who included references to autonomy as an experience of home in their accounts of people who reported the need to control the timing of certain daily activities such as meal times.

Control of the environment, through asserting privacy or changing the decor, was another means of attaining autonomy discussed by the people of this study and in related research literature. A woman in this study confirmed her enjoyment of company, but stated that she also required the choice and control of her environment to be quiet and having the ability to restrict access to her living space when she wanted privacy. This woman described life long habits of choice and independence in her daily living and concluded that without that continuation she would not experience home.

Many researchers in the fields of behaviour and environment, place attachment, and the built environment, believe that there are factors of personal control that involve the manipulation of space thus increasing satisfaction in the experience of home (Saile, 1983; Doyle, 1992; Marcus, 1992). Autonomy as an experience of home was enhanced through redecorating or designing, both in this study and in the research. For example, the man in this study who felt he had “a ways to go” before he experienced home again, intended to change and personalize the look of the space in his home. Such changes included building a deck and small flower bed in his back yard.

People of this study who had relocated reflected on the independence they had to decorate with their own things according to their tastes. Saile (1985) related similar ways of experiencing home describing the ritual processes that relocated people used to transform their space into the experience of home. Similar to the man of the present study and his family’s celebrating in the new home, Saile reported on gatherings of people for "house warming", as enhancing the experience of home through ritual celebrations. Saile reported on home in the context of mastery of environment and ritual gatherings, supported by the findings of this study through the reflections of people working toward the experience of home following relocation.

Doyle (1992) likened home for an older person to "a kind of nest in which they pursue their final life evaluation" (p. 796). This phrase was used by one of the women of this present study who spoke of her experience of home being the independence to create an environment that suited her and her husband. She reflected on being able to do what she liked with her surroundings, with her husband adding that the experience of home was creating a coziness, "a nesting place" through furnishing, fixing, painting and decorating. Although this couple was not necessarily involved physically in the creation of their space, they experienced home through the autonomy of directing the changes by others.

Whether the element of home is referred to as personal control, as it often is in the research literature, or autonomy, as it is also many times labeled, the findings of various studies agree and are supported by the present study in its finding of autonomy as enhancing the experience of home as people have choice, control and independence in regard to their living space and their daily routines.

Contribution and Implication of the Findings

A contribution that this research makes to the literature is the holistic, integrated presentation of the experiences of the older rural people. All of the older people described experiences of home that included all three elements of home. It appears from the findings of this study that the three elements were of significance to the participants but it is not known absolutely as to whether all three are required for there to be an experience of home.

The review of literature did not indicate the requirement of the various reported elements to be concurrent. The studies reviewed reported a variety of elements of home, some of which are found in the present study, but none of those studies reviewed reported the finding that any combination of elements were required for there to be an experience of home. The current findings from this study suggest the need to explore further the integrated nature of the various separate elements of home that are reported in the literature.

Another contribution of this study is the description of the ways that the older rural people enhanced the three elements of home. There was a paucity of reference in previous studies of home to having a connection to nature, the kitchen as gathering place, significant things within their context, or having space for hosting others. With only a few references in the literature to these enhancements of the elements of home, the findings of this study add to the body of literature indicating the need to consider them in situations of relocation of older rural people.

The results of this study have implications for the families and professional helpers of older rural people. It is hoped that those assisting older people in preparation for relocation of home will be able to recognize that the elements presented as representing the experience of home are broad in scope yet integral to the experience. Helping older individuals to explore elements of home would initiate consideration of the experience of home in ways that many older people had not considered. The means that helpers may implement may include discussions that ask the person about their surroundings and the importance they place on certain items, colours, and the space in which they live. The interview questions that guided this study may assist helpers with a beginning step toward conversations that would help the older person to explore their experience of home. Self awareness is a key to coping and managing stressful experiences. Discussing the elements of home and how the older rural people of this study have enhanced that experience may help older rural people explore their own needs in planning for successful relocation.

Other groups who may benefit from this study are housing and facility planners and those who provide care for older rural people. Housing may include anything from an adult apartment, to sharing a home with adult children, to a continuing care/nursing home. Those who provide care may include family who live with the older person, or group home providers or facility personnel.

For examples of the considerations and implications of the results of this study, we will revisit Mike, whose situation began the questioning that resulted in a study of the meaning of home for older people. Given what has been learned from the participants of this study, if Mike had been a rural person, Mike's request to return home may have been viewed differently. His wish to return home to cook his own chicken and potatoes might have indicated his desire for autonomy in a choice of meals or it may have indicated a need to have purpose in his day such as the need to prepare his own meals. Having a kitchen that was "residential" in looks and space would invite him to sit and visit with others in a comfortable and familiar manner.

His life style and daily patterns of the past may have included a view to the outdoors that provided a connection to grain fields and the changing seasons, therefore the view from his care facility would need to incorporate the rural vista. In this way he could continue his connection with nature through observation that might include watching the working of the land during the three working seasons and watching the season's effects on the trees and bushes nearby. Raised planters, vegetable gardens that produced food for the facility kitchen and his plants that required his attention and care for their survival would add to his purposeful activity.

The provision of adequate personal space for significant possessions would allow Mike to bring his collection of spoons that provided memory links to others as well as to his memories of places that link him to special times of his life. Along with his spoon collection he may need to bring his deceased wife's bell collection because the two collections always hung side by side. Without the significant things in context with each other, the meaningfulness of the spoon collection is lost. His relatedness to past times and people is met within the context of his significant possessions.

The space for private hosting of others would have provided Mike with an avenue for relatedness to others who were special in his life. A room or a second bed in his room, where a relative or friend visiting from a distance might stay for a night or two would have provided for shared time and continuation of established patterns of relating.

Mike was known at his previous residence as one who helped others in need. Given his pattern of helping which enhanced the purpose to his day, opportunities for helping within his current facility may have granted him one of the experiences of home he sought. The care staff could endeavor to understanding Mike's helping patterns thus assisting him in identifying the places within the facility where his helpfulness would provide him with purpose that was meaningful.

As a rural person Mike may have identified his work and responsibilities that enhanced his sense of purpose, contributing to his experience of home. There may have been a place for Mike to supervise the garden work or provide input on the upkeep of the physical space if those where his areas of expertise. His physical condition may have prevented first hand contributions but involvement for his knowledge and expertise may have supported his search for responsibility that would enhance his purposeful activity.

Encouraging autonomy and providing opportunity to create a personal space that reflected his tastes and lifestyle might have added significantly to Mike's experience of home in the care facility. Painting the walls of his room in a colour that complimented the furnishings he brought with him would have provided him with the ability to choose the atmosphere of his immediate surroundings. It would also have provided him with the responsibility to direct and maintain the surroundings in the state that was most comfortable for him. In this way a combination of autonomy and ongoing purpose would have been enhanced.

For some people, the experience of home may not be transferable to a new location, especially in later years. One person in this study claimed that his experience of home was directly tied to his home, its geographical location and the physical building in which he lived, and in which his parents had lived before him. His belief was that home for him could not be experienced elsewhere. It would not be realistic to think that for all older rural people the experience of home is transferable by providing for relatedness, purpose and autonomy and with the various means people use to enhance the experience. There will always be those for whom staying in their current home is the only means to experiencing home. Perhaps the results of this study will assist with a means of identifying those who are unable to transfer their experience of home. Through exploration of an individual's experience of home, an indicator, such as memories tied to a certain structure, may lead one to question the ability of the older person to transfer their experience of home to a new location. If an older person relayed significant experiences of home that were not within their physical or emotional ability to transfer then alternatives to relocation might best be explored, with an attempt to find a means to support the person in the present situation. The study provides a groundwork in which to engage the older person considering relocation in discussions of their experience of home in order to assess their ability to transfer their experience.

For those providing support or care to the older person, the findings of this study assist in supporting the experience of home for older rural people. The knowledge that the three elements of relatedness, purpose and autonomy are required for the experience of home for the participants of this study, could be used for creative planning. Discussions should be encouraged with the individuals about their experience of home with the results used to support integration of activities, programmes or informal supports that enhance the person's required or desired elements. Care providers who are able to offer integration of these elements into the common daily experiences of older rural people, through supportive atmospheres that encourage people to pursue their experience of home, will have honoured the intent of this study .

Directions for Further Research

The purpose of phenomenology is to describe the essence of a phenomenon. This study described the experiences of nine older rural people who were able to relate their experience of home through stories and reflection. The elements of home that emerged from this study have been documented in the literature, providing validity to the findings. However, the elements that emerged from the present study do not provide explanations which support or disprove a set of assumptions or hypothesis. Some new aspects of home emerged that have been discussed as indicating the need for further research. Furthermore, the study cannot be generalized to other older rural people as the sample consisted of a very small number of people who do not necessarily represent the population of older rural people who have experienced home. This is not the intent of a phenomenological study.

As stated in the previous section, further research is required to explore the concurrency of the elements of home. To this point, awareness of various elements for the experience of home have directed encouragement of people to attain home through fragmented aspects such as encouraging people to retain their favourite chair or other symbolic and special possessions when relocating. Understanding and recognizing the holistic nature of the elements of home will advance the ability of people to attain home as they plan for relocation.

There is a group of older rural people whose experience of home has not, to my knowledge, been described and requires further study. This group consists of older people who live in isolated rural settings, and have limited social and professional supports. They may have experienced home in a different manner than others living in rural areas who have more physical and emotional supports. This may be a vulnerable population in situations that necessitate a move from home to another setting due to reduced personal abilities. More understanding of their experience of home is needed if there is to be an understanding of home for the full range of older rural people.

Another area requiring further study is that of gender differences in the experience of home. From the literature reviewed for this study there was no indication of research involving older men and their experience of home. Studies reviewed focused on both genders, with other studies focusing on women and their experiences. One study reviewed, that of Damsma et al., (1998) reported on the possibility of gender differences from responses of men and women in their study regarding the requirement of privacy versus relationships. Assisting older people with appropriate settings that support the experience of home necessitates knowledge in the area of gender differences.

Research on how older rural people successfully transfer their experience of home to a new setting and especially to group care settings is worthy of further investigation. It must be kept in mind that rural older populations are changing, with mobility, fewer ties to the immediate physical setting, and fewer ties to the values that guided their parents' lives. We should remain vigilant in understanding the changing lives of the next generation of older rural people and through on- going research in this area, researchers should not allow historic images to obscure the changing realities of old age in the coming years.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION FORM

Project Title: The Meaning of Home to Rural Older People

Researcher:	Pamela Ralston, BSW, RSW, M.Sc. (candidate) Centre for Health Promotion University of Alberta
Thesis Supervisors:	Dr. Norah Keating/Dr. Dianne Kieren Department of Human Ecology University of Alberta 492-6000

The purpose of this study is to understand what home means to rural people over 75 years who are currently living independently. You will be asked about your view of the meaning of home. This might mean describing feelings of being at home, and what makes your living place home-like. The interviews will be in your home at a convenient time to you.

You will be interviewed two times. Each interview will last about one hour. You may refuse to answer any questions and stop the interview at any time. You may drop out of the study at any time.

The interviews will be tape recorded. Besides the investigator, only the typist will listen to the tapes. The tapes and typed interviews will be kept in a locked drawer. When the study is over, the tapes will be destroyed. The typed interviews will be kept for future possible studies, according to standard practice. The final report may include your comments from the interviews. Your name will not appear on any comments or reports.

The investigator might ask you to make suggestions of photographs she could take in your home that would show what you mean when you describe your meaning of home. Photographs will not be taken without your permission. Any photographs taken will be used in the final report only with your permission and the permission of anyone who shares your home once you have seen them. Names will not be attached to any photographs.

There will be no harm to you by participating in this study. None of the helping services you currently receive will be affected. You will not benefit directly from being in this study. Your participation may be helpful to people in the future who design housing for older people.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

This is to certify that I,________________________,
print name

agree to participate in this research project. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time. I am aware of the purpose of the study and what is involved. All my questions have been answered in a way that I understand. I can call the investigator Pam Ralston (342-2206) or her supervisor Dr. Norah Keating (492-4191) at any time if I have questions or concerns.

______________________________ Date____________

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Witness

APPENDIX C

USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS
CONSENT FORM

I have seen the photographs taken for the purpose of this study. I understand that these photographs will be used in the published results of this study. My name will not appear in this study or with these photographs.

As a member of the home where these photographs have been taken, I give permission to the researcher to use these photographs for the purposes of this study.

______________________________ Date________________

Signature

____

Signature of Researcher

____

Signature of Witness

APPENDIX D

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As the employee of the researcher and transcriptionist for the material gathered for this research project, you will be exposed to confidential material. Security of information is of the utmost importance.

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of all information gathered from participants in this study. No information, including content of interviews will be shared by me with any other individual.

Signed ____________________________ Date_____________________

Witnessed__________________________

APPENDIX E

REFERRAL RESOURCES FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING DISTRESS

Canadian Mental Health, Central Region, (no fee)	Scott Billan	342--2266
Continuing Care Counsellors, DTHR, (no fee)	Roy Koshy	341-2100
Red Deer Family Service Bureau, (sliding fee scale)	Jan Stevens	343-6400
Golden Circle Outreach, (no fee)	Colleen Palichuk	343-6074

APPENDIX F

REQUEST FOR REPORT

I wish to receive a summary of the final report.

NAME:

ADDRESS: